

Stronger Together: celebrating the power of Community Conference and AGM 2018 24 May, Merchant Taylors' Hall, London

Members present (totalling 84, representing 59 SACREs)

Paul Smalley (Chair), Barking & Dagenham (Robert Turner), Bath & NE Somerset (Dave Francis), Bedford Borough (Ruth Broomhall, Rachel Gleeson), Bolton (Martin Short), Bracknell Forest (Anne Andrews), Bradford (Ros Garside, Helen Sellers), Bromley (Roger Bristow), Buckinghamshire (Bill Moore, Margaret Dean), Cambridgeshire (Amanda Fitton, Kerri McCourty), Camden (Shahanaz Begum, Anne Boater), Central Bedfordshire (Jane Chipperton), Cornwall (Felicity Henchley, Linda Rudge), Coventry (Hester Meacock), Croydon (Alison Brunt), Cumbria (Sheila Gewolb), Dorset (Lynda Ford-Horne), Dudley (Dilwyn Hunt), Durham (Isobel Short), Ealing (Marianne Sizen, Lesley Prior), East Riding (Sue Holmes, Phil Davison), East Sussex (Roy Galley), Essex (Sarah Lane Cawte), Greenwich (Mike Cullinane, Mariano Marcigaglia), Hammersmith & Fulham (Bhupinder Singh), Hampshire (Heather Thorpe-Tracey, Lisa-Marie Taylor), Havering (Luthanela Adams), Hertfordshire (Lisa Kassapian, Tim Hutchings), Isle of Wight (Sue Cox, Debbie Andre), Kensington & Chelsea (Javid Djalili), Kent (Steve Manion, Penny Smith-Orr), Lambeth (Jo Backus, Shaun Burns), Lancashire (Peter Martin, Alison Lloyd), Lincolnshire (Mark Plater), Liverpool (Carol Close, Sophie Colligan), Milton Keynes (Tina Virdee Basra), Newham (Ed Hoyle, Claire Clinton), Nottinghamshire (Ken Johnson), North Yorkshire (Nasr Moussa Emam), Norfolk (Sue Paice, Janet Marshall), Peterborough (Ryan Blackburn), Poole (David Rees), Portsmouth (Elizabeth Jenkerson), Redbridge (M Leonard), Rochdale (Margaret Smith, Peter Owen), Salford (Alex Klein), Solihull (Lizzie McWhirter), Southwark (Linda Coplestone), Staffordshire (Michael Metcalf), Suffolk (Janice Lee, Helen Matter), Surrey (Rachel Boxer, Kay Hammond), Sutton (Monica Cockram), Tower Hamlets (Deborah Weston), Wandsworth (Angela Rundle, Sarah Abouzeid), Warwickshire (Gill Kingston), Westminster (Graham Buckle, Chuehyun Shih), Wigan (Gayle Smith, Angela Naylor), Windsor & Maidenhead (Barbara Meaney, Rosemary Webb), Wokingham (Michael Freeman), and Emily Norman (Exec).

In addition, Gill Vaisey (WASACRE) and invited past NASACRE Chairs: Jane Brooke, Dilip Kadodwala, Dennis Doe, Bruce Gill, plus the speakers, as listed.

Welcome and introduction

Paul Smalley, Chair of NASACRE, welcomed delegates to London, thanking people for travelling, many over long distance, to join the 25th Conference and AGM. He particularly welcomed past Chairs of the association who had been invited for NASACRE's Silver Jubilee event.

The Rt Hon Charles Clarke (Visiting Professor, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia) and Patron of NASACRE, opened the conference with a summary of the changing educational landscape over the past 25 years and NASACRE's part within it; he applauded the many successes that SACREs had achieved in that time, outlining some of the work they might be tackling in the future.

The text of Charles' opening remarks is available for members to access on the NASACRE website.

Keynote Address

Dr Vanessa Ogden: *SACREs, Schools and Society: Building Bridges Across the Faultlines*

CEO of the **Mulberry School Trust**, Vanessa read Theology and Religious Studies at Manchester University, was an RE teacher, and currently serves on the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE). She traced the origins of statutory Religious Education as set out in the 1944 Education Act up to the modern day, looking at the role of RE in schools, from her experiences as a serving RE teacher helping to shape young minds and personalities, in engaging with interfaith dialogue. She spoke passionately of the way that she works with young Muslim students to empower them and SACREs' part in working to challenge schools to deliver good RE. She highlighted the important role that SACREs have – potentially playing an even wider role in the future, as RE becomes ever more important, with a unique contribution to make to a cohesive society.

Vanessa then answered members' questions, stressing the importance of ensuring pupils' intellectual engagement with faith, and encouraging delegates to develop a vision for what might be achieved for RE in the future. She mentioned three purposes of RE: academic rigour, rich personal development (SMSC), and wider social purpose, as young people interact with society.

Table Discussions

Delegates worked in groups to discuss various questions to provide evidence for the Commission on RE (CoRE) in support of the Commissioners final report, due to be published on 12 September:

The following over-arching questions were considered:

- What is the extent to which SACREs collaborate with each other?
 - Does your SACRE collaborate with another SACRE?
 - Can you give us some examples of such collaboration?
 - If your SACRE does not collaborate with another SACRE why is that? Would you like to see that change?
- What are the biggest challenges presently facing SACREs?
- What are the main barriers that limit SACRE's ability to effectively support RE in schools?
- Did your SACRE submit an annual report in the last year to the DfE or to NASACRE - or both?
- Are your SACRE meetings sometimes/often/never inquorate?
- Does your SACRE often have unfilled vacancies?
 - Is there a particular Committee that is most difficult to recruit to?
- Does your SACRE have an RE adviser/consultant to support it?
- Dr Ogden spoke about 'faultlines' that cause difficulties for schools and SACREs to work together: Has your SACRE had experience of any of these 'faultlines'? Can you give examples?
- Dr Ogden spoke about bridges that can connect SACREs, schools and society. What are your strongest bridges as a SACRE?
- Are there any key points from the talk for NASACRE to take up in support of SACREs?

*A compiled summary of discussions will be made available from the **NASACRE AGM 2018** webpage, together with PowerPoint presentations and edited audio-clips from the Keynote Address & other sessions.*

After lunch, **David Hampshire** spoke on behalf of the IFN about the **Inter Faith Network Youth Project**. He brought greetings from the IFN and thanked NASACRE for all their support for the IFN over 25 years. The IFN has recently been meeting with young people 16-25 in schools around the country for a new report **Connecting across the Generations**, currently being compiled, asking about what they want from interfaith engagement and where it should go next. David asked how we might adapt existing structures to meet their needs. In rural schools there are particular needs where students don't see themselves staying in their home locality at adults. Many students say they have no particular faith and yet they are invariably interested in matters of faith. Young people universally say they want to make a better society.

David answered members' questions, making the point that SACREs need to 'know' their areas and communities. Is there a case for involving young people in youth SACREs or IFNs?

SACRE presentations

Representatives of Bradford, Hampshire and Newham SACREs gave presentations of recent work:

- **Bradford's** project concerns the development of pupil involvement in Collective Worship, moving towards inclusive worship – a Whole School Determination. This has resulted in Bradford SACRE reviewing its guidance on Collective Worship.
- The **Newham** project was summed up in a video on religious bullying, focussing on what different religious texts say about how we should treat each other and students discussing these with faith leaders, thereby learning to better understand each other.
- **Hampshire's Youth Voice** to SACRE, involving young people in understanding and inputting to the work of SACRE.

Westhill Awards

Michael Metcalf expressed NASACRE's appreciation to Westhill for continuing to fund the awards over the last 12 years or so. He announced the winners for 2018. There were five applications for total funding of £20k. Two had been referred back to their SACREs for further clarity, but it was good that new SACREs are represented amongst the Award winners.

The successful SACREs are:

Bedford Borough - linking *Pilgrim's Progress* to the local Agreed Syllabus

Cheshire East - enabling pupils from mono-cultural schools to meet with pupils from culturally diverse schools

Cheshire West and Chester - developing a model transition project, exploring diversity and religious literacy

Cumbria - exploring sacred texts with pupils to create a treasure chest of "gems" as a lasting resource

Waltham Forest & Newham - developing support for RE through a series of conferences and the setting up of a Youth SACRE

Question Time

Table groups submitted questions for the panel - Charles Clarke, Vanessa Ogden, Jane Brooke (AREIAC Chair), Rudi Elliott Lockhart (RE Council), chaired by Paul Smalley.

The questions and some of the points raised were:

Is there a future for locally determined syllabuses? What are the alternatives?

- A national syllabus with a local component? There is currently a patchy path of local syllabuses
- A national syllabus would need to be the best syllabus we can put together, with academic rigour
- A national entitlement (NE) is proposed by the CoRE. Headteachers need to be accountable for the RE in their school and a NE would support this. But is this enough?

What action can be taken against LAs that do not give sufficient funding to SACRE fulfilling its statutory responsibilities?

- The legal obligation is unclear... the DfE does not seem prepared to deal with this, and it is one of the big issues for SACRE, both for RE and Collective Worship
- Paul (Chair) asked SACREs to make NASACRE aware of instances, so that SACREs can be supported

Is there a way that SACREs and NASACRE can encourage people to become RE teachers? Much of what we hope for is dependent on providing the skill base to deliver

- There are resources that support recruitment, but we all need to work collectively on this
- RE Ambassadors are teaching in the Cheshire area to promote their good RE to other classes
- *Beyond the Ordinary* shows that RE applicants are down by ~25% for next year, but this is generally about recruiting to the teaching profession, and not just about RE

How much influence can RE have in promoting positive attitudinal change for young people, compared to the influences of home, family and faith communities?

- RE is not the 'Silver Bullet'?
- Headteachers are 'gatekeepers'; SACREs could lead on focusing on the Headteacher's role and supporting it
- Schools cannot replace faith communities but can create an open climate in which children are educated about society

Young people are open to hear about RE, but parents/guardians are often blinkered. Could we produce something to explain why RE is important aimed at them?

- More parents are identifying as 'non-religious'; we should work on the language that we use when we talk with them
- Involve parents in pupils' faith visits

How can the existence of faith schools help or hinder community cohesion?

- Some 'faith' schools are increasingly narrow – we should contest that. There is more information about Clarke/Woodhead research on Westminster Faith Debates website, together with the text of Charles' welcome at the beginning of the day: <http://faithdebates.org.uk/blog/charles-clarke-address-25-years-of-nasacre/>
- Increasing problem with different styles of faith schools – some are far less community integral than others

AGM and Business Meeting 2018

1. **Apologies:** Denise Chaplin (Exec), Philip Davies (Exec), Sushma Sahajpal (Exec), Lilian Weatherley (East Sussex), Molly Ballard (Lewisham), Angela Gluck (ex- Chair), Julie Grove (ex-Secretary)
2. **Minutes:** The draft Minutes for 2017 were accepted as an accurate record of the AGM held on 16 May 2017 in York. Claire Clinton (Newham) proposed their adoption, Alex Klein (Salford) seconded, and all were in favour of their adoption.
3. **Chair's report:** Paul Smalley(PS) introduced his report (previously posted on the website).

PS 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 ideas. Paul mentioned the current NATRE Primary survey and David Lundie's survey on social media, encouraging members to make a return.

A question was asked whether all SACREs receive the Briefing – yes, they do, but the new GDPR, coming into force tomorrow, may mean that it will be more difficult to reach non-member SACREs.

4. **Secretary's report:** there were no questions arising from the Secretary's report, posted online.
5. **Accounts and Treasurer's report:** Michael Metcalf (MM) presented his report on the association's accounts for the calendar year 2017, previously posted online. Highlights are:

- Our finances are more healthy than in 1993! There are now considerably more than double the number (154) of LAs in England alone, doubling our membership income.
- 123 SACREs are currently paid up (80% of the total)
- Some SACREs hardly ever pay, and some pay sometimes and not others
- Joint conferences, such as with AREIAC, can be difficult to invoice and take a long time to wind up financially!
- MM reiterated his plea for LAs to identify their payments by informing him when they have been made
- The closing balance at 31st December 2017 was £32,564

Bill Moore (Buckinghamshire) proposed that the accounts be accepted, Roger Bristow (Bromley) seconded and the meeting unanimously adopted them.

6. **Subscription Increase:** All voting SACREs were in favour of an increased subscription of £105 in the online poll; SACREs will be invoiced for £105 for 2018-19 in the next month or so.

New Executive: Roy Galley (East Sussex) and Dr Robert Morgan (Greenwich) were nominated for the position of Vice Chair. In the resulting election, Roy Galley polled 18 votes and Robert Morgan 33, so Robert was duly elected as Vice Chair of NASACRE.

There were 2 new nominations for three vacancies on the Executive, Linda Rudge (Cornwall) and Dr Sheila Gewolb (Cumbria); as there were no other nominations, both were elected unopposed.

Michael Metcalf (Treasurer) and Sue Holmes (Secretary) were each renominated by their respective SACREs to serve another 2-year term.

Having finished their term of office, Nasr Emam and Denise Chaplin stepped down, but are co-opted to the Westhill Panel, and to support the preparation of SACRE Briefing, respectively. Philip Davies remains co-opted to support MM as Assistant Treasurer.

7. Matters arising from the Minutes, not previously addressed: there were none.

AOB: Alex Klein (Salford) asked whether the NASACRE Executive might reflect the Committee structure of SACRE. PS replied that member SACREs need to make clear proposals that have been discussed and minuted in their meetings, in order to move a motion for debate at the AGM.

He suggested that Salford might prepare a motion at least 3 months before the 2019 AGM and then SACREs will have time to debate it properly in their meetings, in the run-up to conference.

Conclusion

Paul Smalley thanked everyone for coming, mentioning some upcoming conferences which may inform SACREs' work, such as 20:20 at Crewe in October. He thanked those Executive members who had taken special responsibility for organising the conference, Claire Clinton and Elizabeth Jenkerson, and also Marie Cooper, our Administrator.

He drew the conference to a close by encouraging SACREs to keep up their fantastic work across the country for the next 25 years.