



Standing Advisory Council  
on Religious Education in  
South Gloucestershire

**Standing Advisory  
Council on Religious  
Education in South  
Gloucestershire  
Annual Report  
2013-2014**

## **Chair's foreword:**

Over the last ten years of my term of office as Chair of the SACRE we have built a SACRE with a proud reputation for supporting South Gloucestershire schools in their work to provide good quality Religious Education and Collective Worship. We have sought to ensure that it reflected well on South Gloucestershire Council and have promoted our work to other SACREs all over the country. However, the year being recorded in this annual report has been the most difficult of my tenure. Following the retirement of our long standing Serving officer, and the many changes of personnel within the authority, we have struggled to carry out our statutory role. The official duty of the SACRE is to advise the local authority but this SACRE's members – all of them volunteers – strive to support schools actively through workshops and advice publications. This report comments on the activities which we have been able to hold, but is not a report of as full a programme as we usually achieve.

Active support from the local authority is vital to SACRE's work. The role of the Serving Officer is critical, providing a link between the authority and SACRE. The provision of a Serving Officer for SACRE demonstrates the Council's interest, support and appreciation of this statutorily required group for South Gloucestershire. We thank Kathryn Symons for her work as our Serving Officer during this transition year, which she juggled with her full time role as an infant teacher. At the time of writing, we have been advised that further support will be provided via a Service Level Agreement with the Bristol Diocese.

I must pay tribute to the members of the SACRE for their continuing support without which SACRE could not function. The Clerk Joanna Wallis has, as usual, provided exemplary service to the SACRE. It is to be hoped that, with support from the local authority, 2014-2015 will be a year in which we can rebuild the strong and effective SACRE of which we were justifiably proud.

Alderman Colin Cradock  
Chair of the South Gloucestershire 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.

The South Gloucestershire SACRE believes that Religious Education is unique because it is the only subject where the curriculum is not prescribed nationally but agreed locally.

SACRE takes an active part in the review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus every five years. The current syllabus is called 'Mystery and Meaning' and the current edition was launched in 2014.



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## 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 2013-2014 were as follows:

### \* **Annual Teachers' conference:**

This was held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and was, once again, a shared event with Bristol SACRE. SACRE fully funds the conference to ensure that the only costs to schools are supply cover for the day. Many South Gloucestershire schools send at least one representative to the day. We have found that holding it jointly with the Bristol SACRE helps to spread the cost, and also gives opportunities to share good practice with our Bristol colleagues.

The 2014 event was on the theme of: Enquiry in RE: Raising Engagement, Improving Progress. It comprised a day of workshops and sharing, with lunch and networking. The day's aims were to help RE teachers to: understand more about:

- handling diversity of opinion –
- listening to conflicting views
- inspiring learners to want to know about others' faiths and beliefs
- helping learners navigate the variety of responses to life's big questions

85 teachers attended the day and feedback from attendees was positive. Thanks are due to SACRE members who helped on the day by running workshops. The conference materials are available online at:

<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/2014/resources-2014-sacre-conference/>

### \* **The Big Questions:**

During 2013-2014, SACRE made arrangements to hold a Big Questions event. The Big Questions sessions are intended to help schools cover some of the key issues of faith and belief. Each session is a half day and is tailored to the needs of the schools local to the place where each session is held. Four such events had been held in 2012-2013 across the authority.

Unfortunately, the event scheduled for 2013-2014 was cancelled as it had been arranged for one of the days of industrial action.

### \* **Music and Spirituality:**

SACRE has been working with its member Alex Wilkinson, Headteacher of Christchurch Junior School Downend to create a session to celebrate spirituality through music. The session is to be aimed at Primary school children and be held in a Primary school. SACRE hopes to complete this work in 2014-2015.

### \* **Speed faithing – Speed phasing**

The South Gloucestershire SACRE agreed to help fund an event held by Bristol SACRE on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July. This event was sub-titled “High speed networking and cross-learning for RE teachers and faith visitors to schools”. Its purpose was “building a network of local RE champions. It used the principles of speed dating to help teachers and faith communities to make links with each other.

The “speed faithing” part consisted of the faith representatives sitting at circular tables and then being visited by groups of teachers from Bristol and South Gloucestershire. They used short statements about their religious belief to show each group what difference it made to their lives.

The “speed phasing” consisted of a reversal of the situation. This time the teachers were seated in their different groups (from Early Years to Post 16). The faith representatives, then went to their tables to learn about the approach needed as school visitors.

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

SACRE is hold grant funding for the South Gloucestershire Secondary Best Practice RE Forum. The grant is being used to facilitate visiting speakers, and was awarded by Culham St Gabriel’s to the Secondary Best Practice Forum. Three meetings so far have been held using the grant.

Best Practice session for primary teachers were held at Little Stoke school on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February at The Tynings, Staple Hill.

Training for 26 governors ‘ Promoting RE and Spirituality in schools’ was also delivered by the RE Advisory teacher with very positive feedback on the twilight of 29/04/14 at Crossways Junior school, Thornbury.

A morning of training was provided to 40 NQT’s at Cleeve Rugby club on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014 by Kathryn Symons.

**\* SACRE website:**

The SACRE has previously had a small section of the South Gloucestershire Council website. This contained online versions of the Agreed Syllabus, all of the SACRE publications for schools, details of its membership and minutes of its meetings. This is no longer online and SACRE has been concerned that these documents are not currently available for schools. SACRE has been advised that it will be able to post documents onto the Sharepoint website, but at the time of writing this has not yet taken place.

## **Agreed Syllabus for RE in South Gloucestershire**

Religious Education is not a National Curriculum subject, but it is compulsory in maintained schools. Across England, RE is taught using each local authority's Locally Agreed Syllabus. The Agreed Syllabus for South Gloucestershire is called Mystery and Meaning. As required by law, the syllabus has been reviewed every 5 years, since the establishment of South Gloucestershire as a separate local authority.

The process for reviewing an agreed syllabus is determined by a Department for Education circular from 1994 (Circular 1/94). This states that each local authority must establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) every 5 years to consider a review of the local syllabus. The membership requirements for an ASC are the same as for a SACRE and it has become an established practice in most local authorities for the local SACRE to act as the ASC. Therefore in South Gloucestershire, SACRE has led the process for reviewing the agreed syllabus. A locally agreed syllabus is formally adopted by the local authority if approved by councillors.

In 2013-2014, SACRE led a short review of the existing syllabus. The review fell due at a time of great uncertainty for Religious Education as a subject. Although not a National Curriculum subject, local RE teaching and learning needs to be consistent with the main principles of the National Curriculum. The syllabus also needs to reflect the current GCSE and A level requirements.

The now disbanded QCA had created a 'National non-statutory framework for RE' to help each SACRE produce a high quality syllabus. However, QCA no longer exists and the framework no longer appears to be fully supported by the DfE. A new national model is being provided by the widely respected RE Council. 'A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England' was launched in October 2013 - see [www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)

SACRE decided not to undertake a full review of its syllabus the RE Council's work on its curriculum review is fully completed and the new GCSE and A level requirements are

known. In autumn 2014, SACRE will consider whether it can now proceed to do a full review.

The review done in this reporting year corrected some errors and typographical errors, and clarified issues such as assessment which have altered as a result of national changes.

The Agreed Syllabus Conference met on 19<sup>th</sup> March and approved the proposed revisions to the syllabus. On behalf of South Gloucestershire Council, the Children and Young People's Committee approved the 2014 revision on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 and it was circulated to schools at the end of the summer term 2014.

The syllabus is available online only and can be found via the following link:

<http://www.sgcyp.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=qZ3x3tyl%2bR4%3d&tabid=498&mid=372>

or from the Clerk to the South Gloucestershire SACRE.

During the reporting year, a small working party of SACRE members worked on a programme of local study to incorporate the religious history of South Gloucestershire. When completed, this will be available to schools as an optional extra for the Agreed Syllabus.

## **Monitoring of RE provision in South Gloucestershire**

It is difficult for SACRE to monitor the overall provision of RE in South Gloucestershire schools. It is some years since individual school Ofsted reports specifically commented on RE. The RE Advisory teacher gave online support to three schools updating their overview during the year.

Each year, SACRE is provided with statistics on GCSE and A level performance for South Gloucestershire schools. SACRE analyses this information and uses it to monitor RE provision at this level. SACRE did not receive this information in 2013-2014.

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 Mark Chater on: RE and the New Educational Landscape. The SACRE delegates attended workshops as follows:

- Teaching Christianity
- Report on the RE Council Review – what SACREs can take forward from the review.
- What constitutes knowledge in RE? How SACREs can help teachers make decisions about what to teach

### **\* National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) Annual Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014:**

The keynote speech was by Stephen Lloyd, MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Religious Education. He spoke of his own experience as an atheist teenager when he enjoyed arguing with his RE teacher. He told delegates that there is so much misinformation about the world's religions that RE is more important than ever. Young people need to address the big questions such as 'Why are we here? It empowers them to be free from zealots and from suspicion of people who are different. It is about freedom and truth.

The meeting also received reports on discussions between the National Association of SACREs and the Department of Education on the key issues for Religious Education and Collective Worship.

At each NASACRE AGM there is an opportunity for SACREs. This year there were reports on:

- RE Young Ambassadors schemes
- Use of Committees to re-shape SACRE's structure.
- Creation of a local sections for an Agreed Syllabus.
- Building regional SACRE networks

**\* South Gloucestershire Schools Carol concert 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013**  
A number of SACRE members attended this event.



\* **BHA conference on humanism for RE teachers Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July:**

SACRE member Alex Howard attended and will report back in autumn 2014.

\* **South Gloucestershire SMSC conference: attended by Colin Cradock:**

This was organized by South Gloucestershire Traded Services and led by Katy Staples and two teachers from Horfield CofE Primary School. It helped staff to define their understanding of SMSC in the light of Ofsted guidance and offered strategies for ensuring high quality SMSC in their school.

\* **Culham St Gabriel's RE Leadership Weekend 2013:**

SACRE's Serving Officer Kathryn Symons attended this weekend and offered the following report:

*"The event was called 'Defining our future' and 25+ seminars were spread over two days. These were sandwiched together with Keynote speakers discussing: Setting the big questions, Understanding our context, Leading teaching and learning and Refocusing on the future."*

Thanks are due to those members and officers willing to attend these sessions on SACRE's behalf.

## National Issues



Standing Advisory Council  
on Religious Education in  
South Gloucestershire

### \* **RE Council Review of RE:**

The RE Council published its A Review of Religious Education in England in October 2013. The aim was to give advice and support to SACREs and RE teachers to ensure Locally Agreed Syllabuses are consistent with the changed National Curriculum.

To follow up this document an expert subject advisory group will make recommendations to the Council. Similar groups have already been set up by the DfE to implement the revised national curriculum. The RE group will have the same kind of task, building on new framework from the RE Review.

There is expected to be a revised and new GCSE RE and A level RE from 2016.

### \* **Ofsted report: RE – Realising its potential**

This report was issued in October 2013 and gave Ofsted's view on the quality of RE provision in schools. Ofsted summarized its findings as follows:

*“The schools inspectorate said, in Religious education: realising the potential, that religious education makes an important contribution to pupils' development, both personal and academic. It does so by promoting respect and empathy, which are increasingly important in an ever more globalised and multicultural 21st century. While inspectors identified examples of good practice they found that six out of ten schools examined in this report failed to realise the subject's full potential.*”

*The report finds low standards; weak teaching; a confused sense of purpose of what religious education is about; training gaps; and weaknesses in the way religious education is examined.”*

Ofsted made a number of recommendations, the most relevant for SACRE being:

*“councils and local Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education should work more closely with schools and academies to build networks and share good practice.”*

Ofsted has also issued advice to school inspection teams to check that pupils and students are receiving their entitlement to RE at Key Stages 3 and 4, after finding that over 10% of secondary schools and academies fail to meet statutory requirements for RE.

**\* All Party Parliamentary Group on RE:**

The All Party Parliamentary Group on RE has held an inquiry into the contribution of RE to good community relations. It found that RE has a key role in tackling religious misunderstanding and conflict. In schools with good RE, there is less community tension. The report describes good practice in some schools and recommends how this can be disseminated to all schools. The recommendation most relevant to SACRE's work is:

*“Use of the SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on RE) and other networks to promote contact between young people from all backgrounds, including through youth conferences, linking schools and intercultural projects.”*

**\* National Association for Teachers of RE report - Implementing a Strategy of Regional Support for RE**

The report was also jointly agreed by various RE organisations, including the RE Council. The report suggests that regional co-operation can help teachers to exchange information and share good practice. SACREs are well placed to facilitate such work.

The South Gloucestershire SACRE is already working closely with Bristol SACRE where useful, such as the Teachers conference. The conference is also advertised across other local authorities in the region.



Standing Advisory Council  
on Religious Education in  
South Gloucestershire

## 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 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 2013-2014 South Gloucestershire Council had received three 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 South Gloucestershire school, it should be referred to South Gloucestershire Council for it to deal with. SGC has undertaken to 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 2013-July 2014:

<p>Committee A: Christian and other religious denominations 7 Members</p>	<p>Colin Cradock Ramila Patel Linda Pope April Begley Mukhtar Ahmad Younis Chris John</p>
<p>Committee B – Church of England – up to 3 members</p>	<p>Katy Staples Esther Saunders Sally Sibley</p>
<p>Committee C – teachers nominated by the South Gloucestershire TCC – up to 6 members:</p>	<p>Kath McCarthy Hazel Jefferies Eve Scott Leah Osborne Mary-Anne Willmott Alex Wilkinson</p>
<p>Committee D – Local Authority representatives – up to 3 members</p>	<p>Cllr Jane Allinson Cllr Matthew Riddle Cllr Gareth Manson</p>
<p>Committee E – non voting Co-opted – up to 6 members</p>	<p>Roger Allinson, Derek Jay Alex Howard Peter Day Susan Weaver</p>

During the reporting period, SACRE's chair was Alderman Colin Cradock, and the Vice-Chair was Mary-Anne Willmott.

## How SACRE is funded/administered

SACRE receives funding of approximately £11,500 per annum from South Gloucestershire Council. SACRE creates an annual budget plan for how its funding is to be spent and expenditure is monitored by a designated SACRE member. A budget report is presented and discussed at each SACRE meeting. Thanks are due to SACRE member Peter Day who undertakes this role.

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

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

Since the establishment of the South Gloucestershire local authority, and the South Gloucestershire SACRE, an officer from the CYP advisory staff has acted as SACRE's Serving Officer. This is an important post. The Serving Officer advises SACRE, and enacts its decisions. The post has been a key part of SACRE's success and in particular the holding of events for schools.

Following the retirement of Antony Evans, Kathryn Symons, took on the role of the LA Serving Officer for SACRE, during 2013-2014 alongside her position as Reception class teacher at The Tynings school. SACRE is grateful to her for undertaking this role.

Following discussions with South Gloucestershire Council officials, SACRE's Chair has been advised that the authority intends to provide ongoing support to SACRE through a Service Level Agreement with Katy Staples, Schools Advisor at the Bristol Diocese. At the time of writing, SACRE has been advised that the agreement is now in place.

SACRE has a part time clerk. Hannah Wood also helps the SACRE, working with the Serving Officer, on the organization of its events.

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'.

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



Standing Advisory Council  
on Religious Education in  
South Gloucestershire

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

- Wholesale revision of 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 need after the Service Level Agreement with the diocese comes into force
- Providing support for special schools – helping to facilitate opportunities to learn from Gloucestershire which has specific training in this area
- Providing our strands for schools: Big Issue, NeedLess Greed, music event
- Support for schools on SMSC – putting the toolkit online
- Training RE teachers, and HTLAs – supporting their professional development, and supporting their use of the internet for lesson planning
- SACRE’s own professional development – via continuing our membership of NASACRE and attending national and regional events
- Taking account of proposals for a regional strategy for RE

SACRE has also considered what can be done to streamline its own organization in order to better achieve its own priorities. This will include more cluster working and an extension of the existing sub groups.

SACRE meetings in 2013-2014 were held at The Grange School, Warmley. Thanks are due to the school for allowing us to do so. The meetings were well attended by members. In 2014-2015 SACRE meetings will be held at a new location.

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

The South Gloucestershire SACRE can be contacted via its Clerk:

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