



Swindon's SACRE's Annual Report 2015-16



Pupils at Peatmoor Primary School

Explore Passover in the Jewish faith



Chair's foreword

2015-16 was a productive year for Swindon SACRE. We continued to serve the schools in the authority by providing CPD for teachers and Governors, that supporting their teaching and oversight 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 the UK.

This has been a year of stability for Swindon SACRE as the key positions of chair, clerk and adviser saw no changes, and we could consolidate our work and support our local schools.

It has also been a year where we have continued to struggle with the challenges to the provision and status of Religious Education. We discovered that Swindon has the lowest levels of exam entries at GCSE nationally. Many of our Secondary teachers are the only RE specialist in the school, and are leading teams of non-specialists with little support. The only RE that some students are experiencing in Key Stage 4 is through a few lessons as an aspect of PSHE or as an encounter drop down day. SACRE has written to schools voicing our concerns about RE at KS4 and the possible detrimental effect this may have on pupils' religious literacy and ability to navigate the complexity of modern Britain.

SACRE convened an Agreed Syllabus Conference and commissioned a sub-group to assess the options for producing a new Agreed Syllabus. As a result of the recommendations of this group the Agreed Syllabus Conference elected to adopt a model Agreed Syllabus from RE Today services and begun to plan an Agreed Syllabus launch in Autumn 2016.

As Chair of Swindon SACRE I am grateful that SACRE continues to work as a body that takes its duties seriously. Swindon SACRE strives to ensure that the children and young people in Swindon schools experience outstanding Religious Education. This is a task that I am grateful to be assisted in by the vice chair Lottie O'Brien and by Stuart Figini our excellent clerk. We are very grateful for the continuing with the help, support and expertise 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 co-opted 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.

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 practised by people who have live in their locality.

SACRE convenes an Agreed Syllabus Conference to review the Locally Agreed Syllabus every five years. The current syllabus was reviewed in this Academic year 2015-16 and will be launched in the next Academic year.

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 2015-16 were as follows:

An Annual Teachers' conference:

This was held on 29th January 2016 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 15 teachers or HLTAs attended).

The 2016 event was on the theme of: "*Playful RE to inspire and challenge*". The keynote Speaker was Lat Blaylock from RE Today Services.

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

Support for Governors

Governor training was also offered, and explored Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural Development, British Values and the Duty to Prevent. It was attended by 15 delegates. This was important as the monitoring of the entitlement to RE is an element of this aspect of school life. Pupils cannot be tolerant of beliefs and cultures present in the UK unless they are taught to understand them; that implies a commitment to curriculum time and resources.

Best Practice Forum:

3 twilight meetings were held for Secondary teachers. The topics covered were teaching Islam well (4 schools were represented), New GCSE (5 schools were represented), Managing a team of non-specialists (3 people attended)

3 twilight meetings were held for Primary teachers. The topics included How to be an effective RE Subject leader (5 teachers attended), Focusing on Christianity and increasing Subject knowledge, and exciting ideas for the classroom, (16 teachers were present), Humanism and Spiritual Development through RE were explored (7 teachers attended).

Learn Teach Lead Religious Education (LTLRE)

During 2015-16 a new initiative to support the quality of Religious Education in the region was launched. Through the efforts of the adviser to SACRE, funding was secured from the St Matthias Trust and the Jerusalem Trust to invest in a new grass roots succession planning programme. This appoints existing teachers to train them to be RE subject leaders in their area. Emma McCarthy from Orchid Vale Primary School and Emma Ainslie-King from Commonweal Secondary School were appointed as the LTLRE hub leaders for Swindon in 2016 and in the next reporting period they will take on duties as hub leaders for the area.

SACRE website:

The SACRE Agreed Syllabus can be accessed only through the Bristol Diocese website at the moment :

www.bristol.anglican.org/REsyllabuses

Please contact katy.staples@bristoldiocese.org for the password

If a school wants to purchase the downloadable schemes of work that support the agreed syllabus they should contact mike@retoday.org.uk

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>

Agreed Syllabus for RE in Swindon

During 2015-16 will had a full review of the agreed syllabus and have opted to adopt a new Agreed Syllabus from RE Today Services.

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 and through evidence of pupils' work and shared good practice, some schools are providing inspiring and challenging RE which SACRE is helping to resource. In other contexts where leadership teams have not been prioritising the subject, teachers of RE report an uphill struggle to gain curriculum time, budget and SLT support. In some schools the exhaustion levels of a subject leader and the wavering confidence and commitment of members of the team of teachers who teach Religious Education mean that pupils are gaining a less than rigorous and engaging, well monitored learning experience. SACRE remains keen to explore any avenues to accurately monitor the provision of RE as it is a key role for all SACREs.

Public Examination Results

We had 496 entries in GCSE Religious Studies out of 2,111 Key Stage 4 pupils (23%). This is an improvement from last year when only 17% of Swindon pupils were entered for a GCSE.

350 of these were at C or above (71% of entries) This is the same as the national average for the subject

The entries were in 8 schools, with the largest cohort was in St Joseph's, followed Lydiard Park. (The big jump in entries from last year seems to be due to Lydiard going from no entries to the majority of students - although this decision has since been reversed.) The remaining six schools entered between 10 and 47 candidates.

At A level, 54 students entered Religious Studies, of whom all achieved A* - E and 9 achieved A* - A.

We are grateful to Dr Sally Davies Senior Performance Analyst (Education)

Data Intelligence Team Swindon Borough Council for this information

Attendance by SACRE members at outside events

South West Regional SACRE conference:

Two SACRE members attended the March 2016 conference of South West SACREs and reported back to the following SACRE meeting.

The title of the Conference was **“RE: “Now and in the future?”**

The keynote speaker was Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, the Chief Executive Officer of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. He spoke about the possible need for a new legal framework for Religious Education.

Workshops included:

Jonathan Marshall MBE - **“The Prevent duty and RE’s unique contribution to Building resilience”**

Ed Pawson: **“GCSE and A Level: a bluffer’s guide to the new specifications”**

Chris Selway (from South Glos. SACRE):

“Local RE : SACRE members as appreciative audience for Good RE” and “How to make the most of visits and visitors”

David Hampshire: **“Religious Extremism and the 2015 Act”**

Patricia Hannam: **“RE Curriculum or RE Agreed Syllabus: what’s in a name?”**

Verity Holloway: **“RE without levels; Assessment in RE”**

National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) Annual General Meeting,

June 6th 2016

The keynote speech was given by **The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE** speaking on Religion in Public life and the impact historical changes should have on the teaching of RE.

This was attended by the Chair of Swindon SACRE and the SACRE adviser, who offered SACRE a report about the conference and the possible repercussions for RE in Swindon.

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 or other bodies 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 2015- July 2016

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)

Teresa Clerck (Jewish)

Jo Backus (Buddhist)

Committee B – The Church of England

Reverend Clive Deverell,

Miss Janet French

Ms Steph Mundin

Reverend Norma McKeemey

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
Fay Howard
Barbara Parry

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 adviser's time. SACRE was also awarded a further £5,000 to set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference and to adopt a new Agreed Syllabus - £1,000 of which was spent during this reporting period. 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

The three SACRE meetings in 2015-16 were held at:

ChristChurch Community Centre, on the 20th October 2015,

Isambard Community School, on the 22nd March 2016

Swindon Hindu Temple on the 20th July 2016

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 SFigini@swindon.gov.uk



A pupil at Peatmoor Primary School is invited to enter a reflective place as part of a school based trail to explore prayer



Students at Isambard Community School celebrating achievements with the head of department Mrs Chapman