

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Shropshire Annual Report



November 2015 – November 2016

Introduction

2016 has been another successful year for Shropshire SACRE. Like all councils, Shropshire Council has faced severe financial cuts with impacts on service restructuring and delivery, and reductions in staffing. Never the less, Shropshire Council has maintained its support for SACRE and there is never less than one elected member present at each meeting. Attendance by SACRE members at meetings remains high, as does member involvement in the work of schools.

Our School Improvement Adviser with expertise in The Humanities and RE, Alun Morgan, retired during the year. His services have been retained through consultancy arrangements and this has ensured consistent advice and high quality support for SACRE, the Primary and Secondary Co-ordinator meetings, the LA INSET programme for RE and Collective Worship, the updating of the Learning Gateway materials and for general school based consultancy support.

During 2016, SACRE has

- continued to develop multi-faith resources for assemblies
- introduced a developmental planning process to underpin the work of SACRE and ensure its works remains focussed on the requirements of the Annual Report
- received training from a secondary Head of RE regarding his research into the planning and delivery of RE at Key Stage 3.

The major concern of SACRE in 2016 was the late publication of the specifications for GCSE RE, together with the changes in content and the implications for teaching/learning of RE in the classroom. Sadly, several very effective Heads of RE have left education for careers in other areas during the 2015/16 academic year.

Finally, we must record our sincere thanks to Helen Woodbridge (LA Administrative Manager) and Sue Round (Governor Services Manager) for their excellent, unstinting support in underpinning the work of SACRE.

Henry White

Chair of Shropshire SACRE

Section 1. Advice to Statutory Bodies

- a. Shropshire Local Authority
Development and submission of a SACRE Business Plan to the local authority taking account of national, and specifically local, changes in support for RE.
- b. Schools
Following the spring term input from Adrian Black (see section 5b) SACRE had asked the local authority adviser to follow up the recommendations with primary RE leaders and secondary subject leaders at the next scheduled meetings.
Following the autumn term meeting and the report on public examinations SACRE requested that further work is done with secondary teachers on supporting pupils to attain the higher grades at both GCSE and GCE level.
- c. Government or Other Statutory Bodies
Concern was expressed to Ofqual regarding the very late approval of examination qualifications. These were much later for RE than any other subject.
- d. Responses to the above
Shropshire LA remains committed to ongoing professional support for SACRE in terms of clerking and time allocated to support SACRE activities in relation to Shropshire schools.
Both primary and secondary subject leaders responded positively to the sharing of Adrian Black's research.
The 2017 spring term secondary leader's meeting will include a focus on A* and A grade attainment at both GCSE and GCE.

Section 2. Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

- a. Public examinations
Throughout the year SACRE were kept aware of the concerns from secondary subject leaders about the significant delay in the publication of the new GCSE specifications. Subject leaders had been at serious disadvantage on options evenings as they did not have information available to share with pupils and parents unlike all of their other subject colleagues. Concerns continue with problems around the availability of new textbooks to support the teaching of significantly different content specifications and the schools' shortage of funding to purchase even when they become available.
Concern was also expressed over the continuing decline of short course RE in England down by 23% since 2015. Despite national headlines which paint a positive picture of exam entries for RE the Shropshire picture is less healthy.
For 2016, while overall entries for full course have increased from 750 to 852, Shropshire remains stubbornly just below the national figure for the percentage of A*-C passes. Within that the pattern of attainment on this measure is made up of far fewer pupils achieving the higher grades of A* and A and a higher percentage achieving a grade C. Fewer pupils fail to achieve a graded pass than nationally. The picture in terms of attainment on the short course is more positive with Shropshire comfortably above the national figure for both A*-C passes and A*-G. However, the same pattern is repeated of fewer pupils achieving the higher grades of A* and A with significantly more achieving a C. The number of entries for the short course has collapsed from a high in 2013 of 921 down to 415 in 2016.
Within this overall picture 16 of the 21 secondary schools in Shropshire entered pupils for full course Religious Studies, 1 up on 2015. 2 other schools entered pupils for short course giving a total of 18 of the 21 secondary schools entering pupils for a qualification in religious education. Of

the three remaining schools 2 are academies. Two have good non-examination courses in place in KS4 that conform to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The remaining school is an academy.

Entry numbers vary significantly from two schools who enter all pupils for full course to one school which only entered 5 pupils. There is a similar variation within short course entries from the whole cohort in one school to 4 in one other school.

For A Level the same pattern of fewer students in Shropshire achieving the higher grades is repeated from GCSE. The entries quoted above are for schools only. If the college figures are added which has been the method in the past it shows that A Level entries have declined from 126 in 2015 to 71 this year and AS have declined from 178 in 2015 down to 131.

There are currently no national AS results published for comparison purposes.

b. Attainment in RE not covered by public examinations

With the changes in support from the local authority the ability to monitor attainment other than through public examinations has been restricted. The primary curriculum survey has had to be dropped as a source of information to SACRE.

c. The quality of RE provision in schools

Whilst the situation in primary schools continues to be healthy, the continuing loss of subject leaders and specialist teachers at secondary level is a growing worry. The loss of staff has not been for promotion and most have left the profession. Through secondary network meetings subject leaders continue to express their concerns regarding the late publication and content of the new examination specifications.

d. Withdrawal from RE

Throughout the county at both primary and secondary level the number of pupils who are withdrawn from RE is low. Full withdrawal is very limited and associated with pupils whose parents belong to specific religious groups or who hold non-religious views. Of greater concern to schools are parents who withdraw their children selectively from visits or parts of the curriculum, usually but not exclusively in relation to where Islam is taught.

e. Complaints about RE

There have not been any complaints made to the local authority or SACRE regarding RE.

Section 3. The Local Agreed Syllabus

- a. The next review of the local Agreed Syllabus will take place for implementation of the new syllabus in September 2019. Additional non-statutory guidance will continue to be added in the intervening years and publicised through the RE pages of the Learning Gateway and also through LA CPD. The rationale and enquiry based approach which underpin the new syllabus is well embedded in both primary and secondary schools as shown in primary survey returns and from discussions with secondary subject leaders. SACRE are closely monitoring the national developments to see what nearing they may have on the future planned development of the local syllabus.

Section 4. Collective Worship

a. Compliance with the statutory requirements

The changes in local authority support for ACRE activities mentioned above has had a similar impact on the information gathered from primary schools regarding collective worship. The pattern that had been established over the four years of the survey was consistent and there has been no

additional information that has been reported that suggests that compliance at primary level has changed over the past year. SACRE remains committed to pursuing the development of support materials for collective worship in primary schools and are seeking ways forward to enable this to be developed in 2017.

b. Quality of collective worship

As for a above there has been nothing that has been reported over the past year that would suggest that the overall quality of collective worship has changed in Shropshire schools.

c. Determinations

SACRE has not received any approaches for determination from schools.

d. Complaints about collective worship

There have not been any complaints made to the local authority or SACRE regarding collective worship.

Section 5: Management of the SACRE and Partnership with the LA and Other Key Stakeholders

a. Attendance at SACRE by committee

Attendance remains good for all committees at the three meetings held over 2016. In addition, it should be recorded that not only is attendance good, but the contribution made by all members is positive. Beyond attendance at meetings SACRE members are very active in visiting schools. For some it is their work as members work in schools, are school governors, provide advice and guidance to schools and increasingly visit schools. Over the past in excess of 100 visits have been made by SACRE members to schools.

b. Membership and training

At the spring term meeting SACRE members were given a presentation based on MA research by Adrian Black – subject leader for RE at Mary Webb School. The focus was on KS3 assessment practice and also looked at the difficulties around the new GCSE papers and examinations. SACRE were disappointed that budget pressures in secondary schools were leading to the appointment of increasing numbers of non-specialist teachers, and also non-specialist teachers with responsibility for RE.

A key development this year has been the work done to take account of the changed level of support from the local authority. SACRE undertook a SWOT Analysis and produced a Business Plan to establish a professional basis for discussions with the local authority around future levels of support and development needs. This plan was worked on by a committee taking account of the Clark-Woodhead recommendations and the Education Excellence Everywhere report and approved at the summer term meeting.

Both the Chair and Tristram Jenkins attended the NASACRE AGM and provided detailed written and verbal feedback to SACRE. The local authority has committed to continue supporting attendance at the AGM along with subscription to NASACRE.

At the autumn term meeting a report was presented based on discussions with secondary subject leaders

c. Complaints about RE and Collective Worship

There have not been any complaints made to the local authority or SACRE regarding RE or collective worship.

Section 6. Contribution of SACRE to Promoting Cohesion across the Community

- a. Identify what SACRE has contributed to other agendas.
SACRE continues to promote community cohesion in all schools through its commissioning role with the local authority consultant. Important information such as the Tell Mama report was required to be shared with primary and secondary RE leaders at network meetings for consideration and action to be taken in school.
- b. SACRE's contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty.
Of the three aims of the General Equality Duty, namely eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations SACRE has made a significant contribution in the last two areas over the past year with schools, local Inter-Faith forums and other faith groups in the community.
- c. What SACRE has done to support schools through events and training.
Through the LA adviser there are both primary and secondary network CPD meetings which update schools on new developments in RE, share good practice and explore teaching and learning strategies and approaches; additional subject specific CPD such as progression in RE; two courses designed to develop teachers' understanding of Islam and Judaism run by SACRE members; and individual school consultancies. Details of attendance and outcomes of all of these are reported to the SACRE through termly report which form a standing item on all SACRE agendas.
The LA Adviser is required to keep the RE pages on the Learning Gateway updated to keep schools informed of new developments between network meetings.
Across SACRE members continue to have regular contact with schools in a variety of capacities including supporting school based CPD activities and events.
- d. Links to broader community initiatives.

Section 7. Summary

2016 has presented SACRE with a range of additional challenges in terms of ways of working and its professional relationship with the local authority. Through the hard work of the Chair and vice-Chair the working relationship and support from the local authority for the immediate future looks positive and SACRE continues to build close links with the teachers of RE in county. There are planned information updates from SACRE on all primary and secondary subject network meetings and feedback is provided to SACRE from these meetings.

Annex A

Shropshire GCSE Results and Trends against National Figures

Full Course

	2014			2015			2016		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-C	72.1	71.5	+0.6	66.2	72.0	-5.8	69.1	71.5	-2.4
A*-A	26.5	30.2	-3.7	22.1	29.6	-7.5	23.5	29.6	-6.1

Short Course

	2014			2015			2016		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-C		56.8			57.5		60	58.9	+1.1
A*-A		19.6			19.7		15.1	20.4	-5.3

Shropshire GCE Results and Trends against National Figures

A Level

	2014			2015			2016		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A*-B	34.6	51.5	-16.9	52.4	54.5	-2.4	32.3	54.6	-18.3
A*-E	100	99.8	+0.2	99.2	98.9	+0.3	95.8	98.4	-2.6

AS Level

	2014			2015			2016		
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap
A - B	22.9	41.5	-18.6	38.2	43.1	-4.9	31.3		
A - E	88.6	91.7	-3.1	91	92.1	-1.1	88.5		

ANNEX B – Shropshire SACRE Membership 2016

Committee A - Other Christian Denominations/Other Faiths

Mrs Denise Samari	Baha'i
Mrs Jacqui Osmund-Smith	Baptist
Mr Darren Clarkson	Buddhism
Mrs Rashmika Jogi	Hinduism
Imam Sohayb Peerbhai	Islam
PC Michael Watts	Judaism
Mr Henry White	Methodist Church
Mr Bill Morris	Orthodox Churches
Mrs Sandy Fairhurst	Religious Society of Friends
Mr Austin Atkinson	Roman Catholic Church
Mr Ajmer Singh	Sikhism
Mr Howard Hutchings	United Reformed Church

Committee B – Church of England

Hereford Diocese

Mr Tristram Jenkins
Mrs Beth Rowe
Mrs Allyson Taylor

Lichfield Diocese

Mrs Fiona Iddon
Mrs Rosemary Woodward

Committee C – Teacher Associations

Mr Jack Cornall	NAHT
Mr Russell Pugh	NASUWT

Committee D Shropshire LA Members

Cllr Mr Roger Evans
Cllr Mr John Hurst-Knight

Co-opted Members

Dr Simon Nightingale Humanist

Clerk to SACRE
Minuting Clerk

Sue Round
Helen Woodbridge

LA Officer

Alun Morgan