



Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)



Annual Report 2012 - 2013

Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education: Annual Report 2012 – 2013

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Chairman's Introduction from Tony Orgee

The past year has been busy for the Cambridgeshire SACRE as it promotes good standards in Religious Education (RE) and advises the Local Authority about matters connected with Collective Worship and RE in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus.

The Cambridgeshire SACRE is very aware that Religious Education can make a useful contribution to a range of activities that help our young people understand and respect the various faith traditions.

Following the launch of the new locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, work continues to provide teachers with the help and support necessary for successful implementation.

The Cambridgeshire SACRE brings together faith representatives, teachers and councillors and I would like to thank all members for the way in which they have worked constructively together. I would also like to place on record the fact that the Cambridgeshire SACRE owes a great debt of gratitude to Sue Ward (RE Adviser for Cambridgeshire) for all her excellent advice, support and guidance over the past year and to Stephanie Boothroyd (Cambridgeshire SACRE Clerk) for her invaluable administrative support throughout the year.

I am pleased to commend this report to you.

Councillor Tony Orgee
Chair, Cambridgeshire SACRE

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The Purpose of the Report

The Education Act 1996, Section 391 (6) and (7), requires that each year the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) from each Local Authority will 'publish a report as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by the representative groups on the Council during the last preceding year'.

Management of SACRE

SACRE is very pleased to report that the Local Authority has continued to support the work of SACRE by providing a clerk for the meetings; services of an RE Adviser to support SACRE and schools; extra funding to cover the publication of a new agreed syllabus, its launch and additional training events for teachers in primary and secondary phases.

The key focus of SACRE's work this year has been to get the new syllabus agreed by the County Council, printed and published, launched and adopted by schools in Cambridgeshire, and to build up the confidence of teachers to deliver the new syllabus effectively in the forthcoming academic year. In early January 2013, Cambridgeshire County Council passed the new syllabus as fit-for-purpose and adopted it without any amendments.

Every Local Authority has to convene a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Cambridgeshire SACRE, which has met four times this year, comprises of four statutory groups. The four groups are as follows:

- Committee A - representatives of non-Anglican Christian denominations, other religions and religious denominations;
- Committee B - representatives of the Church of England;
- Committee C - representatives of the teachers' associations;
- Committee D – representatives of the Local Authority.

This year has seen changes in the membership of SACRE and patterns of attendance at meetings. There continued to be a vacancy for a Sikh and a Jewish representative despite efforts to secure members from these two faiths. Canon Tim Elbourne (Director of the Board of Education from Ely Diocese) resigned due to moving to a new post. He has given many years of service to SACRE and supported its work ceaselessly. SACRE is appreciative of his commitment and time given to SACRE. Art Blokland from the Cambridge Humanist Group resigned and was replaced by fellow member Julia Ewans. There are two vacancies from the teaching unions that have not been filled. SACRE has been dealing with membership representing world views on SACRE.

Following increased difficulty for teachers to get out of school to attend SACRE meetings, meetings were moved to the afternoons. However, this has not resulted in increased numbers of teachers being allowed to attend the meetings.

In January 2013, SACRE re-visited its constitution and considered membership in the light of census data.

The Development Planning Sub-Group recommended reducing the number of objectives on the Development Plan due to restraints on people's time available.

Details of the agenda items, attendance at the meetings and minutes of previous meetings can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council SACRE website at:
http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/279/children_and_families_working_with_partners/3

Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

Impact of the Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM):

Both Mayfield Primary School and St Bede's Inter-Church School, who achieved silver and gold status RE Quality Mark, have continued to support schools with Religious Education, in their second year of the REQM. Some students from St Bede's School were put forward to become national ambassadors of Religious Education. Congratulations to St Laurence Catholic Primary School as they were also successful this year in achieving a gold award. Staff from these schools have offered time and support to colleagues in network meetings and training courses and have given confidence to other teachers regarding their teaching and learning in Religious Education.

Impact of the Academy Programme:

Nearly every secondary school in the county is an academy and there is a gradual increase in interest for primary schools to apply for academy status. SACRE are pleased to report that interest in the new Agreed Syllabus has continued to grow, despite academy schools not having to follow the locally determined Agreed Syllabus. A quarter of Cambridgeshire secondary schools bought into a Service Level Agreement with the Local Authority for continued support from the RE Adviser and SACRE. Network meetings have continued to invite colleagues from academy schools and there have been a number of teachers from academies that have attended the new training for implementing the new Agreed Syllabus.

SACRE is committed to developing positive relationships with academies as well as community schools. There are teacher representatives from academies on SACRE.

Secondary Schools (see Appendix 1)

The introduction of the English Baccalaureate Certificate (EBC), in which Religious Studies was excluded as a humanities subject, does not appear to have adversely affected numbers

following a recognised GCSE course at Key Stage 4 in the county. There is a reasonable stability of the numbers being entered whether for a full-course or short-course in Religious Studies.

It is to be commended that 8 out of 31 secondary schools entered nearly all Year 11 students for either a full or short-course but there are many schools with no record of any entries or very small cohorts, which raises the question as to whether they are fulfilling the legal requirement for the Agreed Syllabus.

- **A-Level entries** are comparable to last year, though there was a slight decline in the number of centres entering students for this subject. Standards were maintained, with nearly all (98.4%) successfully achieving a pass at A-Level.
- **At AS-Level**, there is a decline in the numbers (61.5%) taking this exam due to it being phased out, and a move to have a linear test at the end of a two-year course. This replicates the national trend. There is a significant improvement in the level of achievement, up by 13.8% from the previous year, with 95.5% achieving an A*-E grade. Two secondary schools entered students from Year 11 for AS-Level examinations and were very successful indicating high levels of teaching and learning in Religious Studies.
- **GCSE RS (Full-Course):** SACRE are pleased to report that the results show an increase of 9.8% in the numbers being entered for a full-course which matches the national trend. There is also a record number of schools entering students for the GCSE exam. Records show that 87.5% of secondary schools are entering some or all candidates for GCSE, but two-thirds only offer an optional course in Religious Studies. The A*-C% pass rate compares favourably with English Language results for the Year 11 cohort of pupils in Cambridgeshire. This is pleasing to note. The A*-C% pass rate has fallen significantly (by 4.4%) from the previous year and is below the national A*-C% pass rate for Religious Studies. This suggests a decline in standards of achievement compared to last year, when Cambridgeshire was higher than the national average results.
- **GCSE RS (Short-Course):** The number of students entered for this exam continues to fall rapidly. This year it has declined by 12.8%, resulting in an overall decline of 43% in numbers since 2008. The number of centres entering candidates has also declined. The A*-C% pass rate declined significantly by 8.6% to just 46.0% of the cohort and is nearly the lowest pass rate in the last five years.

Numbers of teachers attending the secondary network meetings has remained static and CPD courses have declined this year significantly.

Primary Schools

It is difficult to state accurately and objectively information about the provision and quality of Religious Education in primary schools. The new syllabus, launched in March 2013, asks for teachers to submit to SACRE annually teacher assessment levels for Key Stages 1 to 3 at the end of each key stage. This will begin from July 2014. This will provide a database from which one can begin to see trends and outcomes of RE compared to other subjects and

nationally. Moderation between colleagues at network meetings will be developed in the forthcoming year to address the issue of having a common understanding of assessment and progression in RE across the schools.

Since the launch of the syllabus, there has been a significant increase in the number of schools sending colleagues to network meetings and CPD training events to be informed about the new Agreed Syllabus. The focus of the network meetings has been to help teachers plan for enquiry-based learning and develop new school-designed units for the new syllabus. Some teachers have joined an Ely Diocesan writing group to produce some draft schemes of work to support the syllabus and all schools. The number of individual consultancies the RE Adviser has delivered on the new syllabus has risen dramatically. The evaluations from the events and courses show a recurring concern by teachers about the new syllabus, since its launch in March 2013. They have a lack of subject knowledge and confidence to assess AT1 and AT2 accurately. SACRE are supporting schools by offering CPD through the RE Adviser in the forthcoming year.

There are frequent changes of leadership of primary RE making it difficult to ensure continuity and development of the subject in some schools. Where there is a stable subject co-ordinator, there is evidence to show a greater depth of understanding and implementation of RE in such schools.

Special Schools

One special school entered students for Certificate of Education level in Religious Studies with success. Colleagues from special schools have attended the training events and the network meetings.

How SACRE has Supported Schools

Effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus

The New Agreed Syllabus

The Agreed Syllabus was approved by Cambridgeshire County Council in early January 2013 and was successfully launched in March 2013 at The Netherhall School in Cambridge. SACRE would like to thank The Netherhall School for the use of the school for the launch and their tremendous support. Lat Blaylock (editor of RE Today and NATRE) was the guest keynote speaker, delivering a speech entitled 'Better RE with the New Syllabus: Challenge, Enquiry, Spirituality' where he talked about the importance of RE in schools. There were also contributions from secondary and primary schools as well as faith communities at the launch.

A good attendance level by Cambridgeshire schools was achieved at the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus. Records show that the launch event was attended by:

- 71 primary schools (out of 205);
- 14 secondary schools (out of 31);
- 1 special school (out of 9).

Lat Blaylock delivered a workshop immediately prior to the launch event entitled 'RE Transitions' which was suitable for primary school teachers and any Key Stage 3 teachers who wished to hear about learning strategies and think about transitions from 11-12 years old. Records show that places on the 'RE Transitions' workshop were booked by:

- 19 primary schools (out of 71 attending the launch event);
- 4 secondary schools (out of 14 attending the launch event).

The new direction of the Agreed Syllabus has received a very positive response from both faith members on SACRE and teachers. Enquiry-based learning supports rigorous and challenging RE. Many teachers have reported that their RE has been re-vitalised because of the new syllabus but they also have requested more help and support with planning and embedding the syllabus alongside the new national curriculum.

The Agreed Syllabus Conference Group recognised that further work and support was needed with assessment and, for the first time, Cambridgeshire SACRE decided to stipulate a number of core units of work that all schools in all key stages should follow, so that moderation of standards across the Local Authority could happen effectively. A more cohesive approach, about which religions were to be studied and when, was also determined.

SACRE have agreed that the RE Adviser writes supporting schemes of work for the core units and adapt the existing schemes from the old syllabus into enquiry-based units. This is ongoing work and will be rolled out gradually over the forthcoming year to schools.

In the new Ofsted framework, the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children has been raised. Training has been offered to schools on SMSC development and the Agreed Syllabus reflects the importance of SMSC to all pupils, especially the contribution by Religious Education.

All schools and SACRE members received national information about various consultancies and surveys, and were encouraged to respond. These included the national review of Religious Education carried out by the Religious Education Council, the impact of the E-Baccalaureate on the provision of RE at Key Stage 4, teacher shortages in RE or provision for CPD for RE teachers, all of which are concerns to SACRE.

For support of the new Agreed Syllabus or for any new RE co-ordinator, please contact Susan Ward (RE Adviser) via e-mail at Susan.Ward@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

Collective Worship

SACRE have discussed the value and importance of Collective Worship in schools. They fully support its importance as Collective Worship contributes to the ethos and social cohesion of a school. They recognise that Collective Worship can enhance the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Following a discussion of a national paper on Collective Worship, produced on behalf of NASACRE and AREIAC entitled 'Collective Worship Re-visited', SACRE agreed to revise their own advice to schools on Collective Worship and include some local case studies of

good practice. They endorsed the sound guidance of the document and recommend schools look at this if they have any concerns about Collective Worship. The 'Guidelines for Schools: Collective Worship in Cambridgeshire' document can be found on the Cambridgeshire SACRE website at:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/279/children_and_families_working_with_partners/3

However, due to other priorities, it was decided to put this task on hold until the new Agreed Syllabus had been launched and implemented. This will be a priority for SACRE in the forthcoming year.

Contribution of SACRE to Social and Racial Harmony Agenda

SACRE have endeavoured to have a breadth of people represented on SACRE to develop a broad and balanced curriculum for Religious Education and offer advice to schools through the local RE Adviser.

It was with great sadness that it was noted that the East of England Faiths Council ceased to exist due to a withdrawal of central funds for the organisation. But thanks must be said for their contribution to the work of SACRE and helping SACRE to find local members from faith communities.

SACRE supports endeavours like the Young Ambassador Scheme for RE (organised by the Religious Education Council) or the Anne Frank Trust and are pleased to report that some Cambridgeshire schools have young people that are ambassadors. Schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are involved in an international project (organised by The Woolf Institute and the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge) related to issues around teaching of faith other than one's own in faith schools. The aim is to provide a toolkit that can help teachers of Religious Education to develop a better understanding of religious literacy and support social cohesion.

If you have any comments about this report, please contact the Cambridgeshire SACRE Clerk via e-mail at Stephanie.Boothroyd@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

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Appendix 1

GCE AS and A-Level and GCSE Results for Religious Education and Religious Studies in Cambridgeshire Schools: Summer 2013

A-Level Religious Studies

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	64	63	41	85	76	72
Number of candidates obtaining A-E grades	98.4%	98.4%	97.5%	97.6%	100%	100%
Number of centres entering candidates	8	9	5	8	7	8

AS-Level Religious Studies

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	22	57	29	53	79	84
Number of candidates obtaining A-E grades	95.5%	81.7%	79.3%	98.0%	87.3%	96.4%
Number of centres entering candidates	10	11 *	8	5	8	8

GCSE Religious Studies (Full-Course)

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	1730	1561	1388	1212	1158	937
Number of grades A*-C	71.3%	75.7%	73.4%	79.3%	80.9%	83.1%
% of the total cohort of Year 11 pupils in Cambridgeshire	28.3%					
Number of centres entering candidates	28	27	21	23	25	23

GCSE Religious Studies (Short-Course)

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of candidates entries	1211	1389	1526	1753	1736	2125
Number of grades A*-C	46.0%	54.6%	45.2%	54.0%	49.1%	48.2%
% of the total cohort of Year 11 pupils in Cambridgeshire	19.8%					
Number of centres entering candidates	14	17	19	19	17	16

* N.B. Schools entered candidates for AS-Level at the end of KS4

GCE A-Level (England only) Religious Studies	2013	2012
Number of candidates entries	19,173	18,950
% of the total number sat	2.5%	2.4%
% of A*-E grades	98.8%	98.6%

GCE AS-Level (England only) Religious Studies	2013	2012
Number of candidates entries	29,889	28,682
% of the total number sat	2.4%	2.3%
% of A*-E grades	92.0%	92.2%

GCSE National (England only) Religious Studies (Full-Course)	2013	2012	2011
Number of candidates entries	239,409	216,373	199,752
% of the total number sat	4.8%	4.5%	
% of A*-C grades	72.1%	73.6%	73.2%

GCSE National (England only) Religious Studies (Short-Course)	2013	2012	2011
Number of candidates entries	150,621	211,269	233,998
% of the total number sat	65.7%	64.8%	
% of A*-C grades	53.5%	53.1%	51.8%