



Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Shropshire Annual Report

November 2012 – November 2013

Introduction

SACRE's work this year has been focused on laying the foundations for its future working. We were sad to lose the services and strong support of Cathryn Hodges, our Chair, who due to personal circumstances has had to relocate away from Shropshire.

The detailed work of SACRE has been devolved largely to its three new committees which are shaping and developing their roles carefully and methodically. A key development point in the coming year will be to integrate the new members into the committee system and support them in bringing extra dimensions to the work of SACRE. Following advice from NASACRE we have adopted the new annual report structure which will also be used as the core for the on-going self-evaluation document and feed in to the action plan. The relevant sections of this document will be 'owned' by the relevant committees and they will have a direct input into their sections. The remaining sections will then be covered through the full SACRE meetings.

The Curriculum and Standards Committee has scrutinised and responded to secondary issues with good effect, and has established a structure to gather comparative information on primary school provision and standards. They receive detailed exam analysis at individual secondary school level and commission further work from the LA where there are concerns indicated by these results. Schools which have performed particularly well receive recognition through a letter sent from the Chair of SACRE commending them on the specifics of their performance with copies sent to headteachers.

The Collective Worship Committee have tackled the different issues at primary and secondary level and have developed separate responses to inform themselves of provision and quality issues in the appropriate schools. These will need to be reviewed following the first use and then form part of the on-going work of the committee as it develops appropriate responses to any issues raised.

The Recruitment and Training Committee has fulfilled its remit by recruiting very effectively to ensure that the SACRE is now highly representative of the local Shropshire community. Following the autumn term SACRE meeting and following a proposal from the committee it was decided to remove the committee. Its training functions will be added to the terms of reference of the remaining two committees and members would be invited to join one of the two remaining committees.

2014 will see the work of the remaining two committees developing and the completion of the review of the Agreed Syllabus for implementation in September 2014 alongside the new national curriculum.

Section 1. Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

During the autumn term the Curriculum and Standards Committee received a detailed report on overall LA trends and patterns for all exams and individual reports on all secondary schools. This was an extensive agenda item.

A standing item on the full SACRE autumn term agenda is a review of the GCSE, AS and A2 performance of Shropshire secondary schools. This includes information on overall achievement, attainment and progress with a survey of entry and provision at KS4. Comparisons to previous years and national benchmarks are also provided. Outcomes of this process are twofold :

- High performing departments receive a congratulatory letter from SACRE with copies to the headteacher, and
- Underperforming departments, particularly where there is little current LA information to hand, are visited through a commissioning of the LA adviser. Detailed reports are fed back to the Curriculum and Standards Committee.

Headline figures for 2013 included:

- A 13% increase in entry numbers for full course GCSE and a 9% increase in entry numbers for short course. Both courses are on three year rising trends for entry of 26% and 16% respectively.
- Full course results dipped slightly from 2012 and remain just below national averages. Short course results improved by 7% on 2012 and are now well above the national average.
- Both full and short course results showed improvements in the percentages of pupils gaining A* and A grades - 8% on the full course and 3% on the short course.
- The vast majority of pupils made progress at, or above, expectations in their exam courses.
- There are no schools where overall performance in RE/RS is currently a major concern.

During 2013 the Curriculum and Standards Committee received a detailed report of curriculum provision in voluntary controlled and community primary schools. The report was based on a representative 20% sample of primary schools and individual school responses were examined by the committee. A summary report was submitted to the full SACRE meeting and a detailed report will be circulated to all schools who have taken part in the survey. The key outcomes from this survey were to identify issues for development and to develop and share a register of good and interesting practice for both SACRE and other schools. These will be built in to the forthcoming SACRE Action Plan for 2014.

Additional support work was monitored through the termly reports from the local authority RE adviser. This covered the primary and secondary network meetings, individual school consultancies and courses, plus wider work on conferences and other curriculum work and projects. Some of this work was commissioned by SACRE to either follow up on issues arising from the reports or from the survey report.

SACRE has commissioned the LA to meet with headteachers and subject leaders in Shropshire academies to discuss the changed arrangements and responsibilities for academies. All SACRE members are fully aware of the new relationship and of their situation in relation to academies. At present all Shropshire academies subscribe to the LA support package and use the

local agreed syllabus. The feature of Shropshire academies is that they still work closely with the local authority as individual schools. Two of the current SACRE members work in academies and this is felt sufficient to provide a link between the work of SACRE and local academies. These arrangements are providing up to date and secure evidence on the provision of RE in both the primary and secondary phases on which SACRE is then taking relevant actions to provide support and challenge.

In June an informal Open Evening was organised where SACRE members met with teachers and saw examples of good practice from schools. Two curriculum presentations were given – one primary and one secondary – followed by question and answer sessions, and in the informal sessions there were presentations from SACRE members and displays of RE resources provided by the School Library Service. The evening was very successful and it is intended to repeat it in 2014 to link in with the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus.

Section 2. The Effectiveness of the Locally Agreed Syllabus

At the summer term meeting SACRE formed an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and launched the review of the syllabus. A preliminary review of the existing syllabus had been conducted through a variety of forms including questionnaires at primary and secondary network meetings; e-mail questionnaires to all primary headteachers and secondary subject leaders; and feedback from the primary school curriculum survey. A summary of all of these responses was used to guide the work of the review.

It was agreed that the bulk of the work should be delegated to the Curriculum and Standards Committee who will monitor and guide the review process. The timing of the review will ensure that the new syllabus will be ready for implementation in schools alongside the introduction of the new national curriculum in September 2014. The wider developments underpinning the national curriculum will be monitored to reflect the development of the agreed syllabus along with the emerging work of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and the recent Ofsted report “Realising the Potential”. This will ensure that the new agreed syllabus will draw upon the latest thinking in religious education to underpin the school curriculum.

A teacher’s working group has been set up to carry out a detailed monitoring of the statutory requirements. This reported its findings to the Curriculum and Standards Committee and then to the ASC in the autumn term meeting. The ASC has asked the working group and committee to carry out further work on the document to present at the spring term meeting. Once the agreed syllabus has been agreed, further guidance materials and supporting documentation covering progression, assessment, planning and religious education in different types of school will be developed.

A launch will be planned for the summer term 2014 to be supported with further opportunities to share good practice from schools.

Section 3. Collective Worship

The Collective Worship Committee meets three times a year in advance of the full SACRE meeting to discuss issues relating to its remit and then report outcomes and actions to SACRE. Its work this year has focused on developing links to staff in secondary schools with responsibility for collective worship. A group e-mail is now in place to allow for communication to be opened up directly with relevant staff. For primary schools, a survey into collective worship provision on the same lines as the curriculum survey has been conducted with a 20% representative sample of community schools. The final report and individual school responses was discussed at the autumn term committee meeting and a summary report presented to the full SACRE meeting. As with the curriculum survey, detailed outcomes including good practice will be sent to all participating schools. Detailed feedback has been received from both Church of England dioceses from diocesan inspections for contextual and comparative purposes. Issues for action and good practice examples have been gleaned from the survey and will be disseminated through local authority training networks. Key points arising from the survey include:

- With one technical exception, all schools meet the statutory requirements relating to the provision of collective worship.
- Collective worship is planned to different degrees by all schools surveyed.
- Only one child has been withdrawn from collective worship in the sample schools.
- The key support request from schools was in the provision of collective worship drawing on other faiths outside Christianity.
- A register of good ideas and practice has been developed and schools are being networked into this.

At the autumn SACRE meeting possible solutions to collective worship drawn from other faiths were discussed and these will be explored in 2014.

The SACRE Open Evening in June contained a workshop run by a secondary school where members were treated to an example of collective worship followed by a question and answer session. This was a highly entertaining and informative presentation and helped SACRE members develop their understanding of collective worship in schools.

Shropshire SACRE has had no requests for determinations in 2013.

Section 4. Management of the SACRE and Partnership with the LA and Other Key Stakeholders

The full SACRE met on three occasions during 2013 and received reports from its three working committees on Curriculum and Standards, Collective Worship and Recruitment and Training. For 2013 the SACRE is highly representative of the faith communities within Shropshire with all major faiths represented. Members have varied skill sets and experience with a core of members either working in education settings, are knowledgeable of them, or work with local faith communities as religious leaders and members. A key driver in the work of SACRE is whether or not the actions taken have a positive impact on the children and pupils in local schools. There are good relationships between SACRE and the local authority – elected members are supportive and bring their wider knowledge to bear in linking the work of SACRE with wider local authority developments. In addition SACRE is supported by a clerk, minuting clerk and local authority adviser with responsibility for RE across all phases who provide advice, guidance and a direct link to local schools.

SACRE members have access to the RE pages of the local authority's closed learning platform which enables them to see the support materials and guidance available to all schools. Meetings have explored the site so that members are knowledgeable of its contents. In 2013 SACRE also received presentations from the Schools Library Service outlining the support and resources they provide for religious education across the county. Each meeting starts with one of the members leading a reflection or input drawn from their personal beliefs, faiths or values. In 2013 these came from our Baha'i representative, Humanist representative and Methodist representative. Current SACRE membership includes two members who work in Shropshire academies.

There are good links to NASACRE with Shropshire represented at most meetings. Members are circulated through a group e-mail system with all NASACRE updates and information, and these are further highlighted at SACRE meetings. SACRE members have been proactive in ensuring future support for its work from the local authority through its local authority members and officers. It is felt that they receive good quality support from the local authority to enable it to carry out and develop its functions in relation to schools in Shropshire.

Section 5. Contribution of SACRE to Promoting Cohesion across the Community

SACRE membership is now very representative of faith groups in Shropshire. All major world faiths are represented with a range of different Christian denominations, good support from both Hereford and Lichfield diocese, from local authority members, humanists and local academies. There are developing links with local Inter-Faith groups and this has been considered as an area for further development in 2014. Information regarding local events is exchanged with the Shrewsbury Inter-Faith Forum and contacts are developing with the South Shropshire Inter-Faith Forum. SACRE members were invited to attend an Explore Islam Exhibition held in Shrewsbury.

Through their daily work many SACRE members are fully engaged with promoting community cohesion as teachers, faith leaders or through their work. Through work done in the past SACRE members are well informed of the nature of the faith communities in Shropshire, the issues they may face and the way in which religious education can help develop community cohesion in the county.

2013 has been a busy year for Shropshire SACRE with a number of highlights. Moving into 2014 we are better equipped with personnel and information systems in place to further develop our work in supporting both the religious education curriculum and collective worship in all Shropshire schools.

ANNEX A – Shropshire SACRE Membership 2013

Committee A - Other Christian Denominations/Other Faiths

Mr Darren Clarkson

Buddhism

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

Committee B – Church of England

Hereford Diocese

Mr Tristram Jenkins
Mrs Sally McCamley
Mrs Beth Rowe

Lichfield Diocese

Mrs Rosemary Woodward
Mrs Fiona Iddon

Committee C – Teacher Associations

Mr Russell Pugh	NASUWT
Mr Jack Cornall	NAHT
Mrs Carol Morgan	NUT

Committee D Shropshire LA Members

Cllr Mr John Hurst-Knight
Cllr Mrs Pauline Dee

Co-opted Members

Dr Simon Nightingale

Humanist

Clerk to SACRE
LA Officer
Minuting Clerk

Sue Round
Alun Morgan
Helen Woodbridge