

# **Northumberland Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

## **Annual Report: Academic Year 2018 – 2019**

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### **The Chair's Introduction and Context**

The work of Northumberland's SACRE has continued and 2018-19 proved to be another busy year. I am pleased to report that the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus, revised and launched for use in schools from September 2016, remains popular with all the schools using it. Teachers have found it helpful to access it electronically via the [SACRE webpage](#) on the Northumberland County Council website.

In some respects, our focus has remained the same: monitoring OfSTED reports; looking at the work of individual schools; considering exam results at GCSE, AS Level and A Level; and reflecting on best practice in the county and elsewhere. We also organised a well-attended and positively evaluated all-day RE Conference (this was the second such event in two years). This will now be an annual event. We invited Joyce Miller, one of the Commission on RE's commissioners, to attend a SACRE meeting where she provided a very enlightening workshop about the 2018 report entitled "[Religion and Worldviews: the way forward](#)"; and undertook a survey in schools that generated a lot of useful data about RE and collective worship. The latter has for the first time provided the SACRE with hard evidence about RE and collective worship that reinforces what is known anecdotally.

We continue to work in a rapidly changing educational environment. The increase in the number of academies and free schools, and the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), mean that we have a changing education framework in Northumberland, as everywhere else. We share concerns over the future of RE in our secondary and high schools as the subject struggles to remain relevant outside of the EBacc. On a personal level, I had a meeting with the Schools Minister and Education Secretary and highlighted our concerns to them about the importance of RE in a broad, balanced and varied curriculum.

I firmly believe that the SACRE can and will play an important role in providing a support framework to access CPD within schools. One of our Graduate Apprentices has recently been working with the SACRE to involve schools in developing how we can best engage with them and has produced some very interesting work for us to take forward.

We can also, through our annual RE conferences, the SACRE webpage and the termly [SACRE Newsletter](#), inspire teachers in all schools to understand the massive benefit that RE can bring to whole-school life.

Northumberland continues to show improvement in education, especially in primary schools where we have now entered the list of best-performing local authorities. However, outcomes at secondary level continue to show areas of concern in some parts of the county. We have a complex mix of very big and very small schools which places pressure on school budgets and resources. As an example, our smallest school has 1 pupil but our biggest nearly 1,900 students. Teacher workload and competition with other subjects mean RE is not always given the focus it should have. Our role – and mine – is to show how RE is both a stand alone but also a complementary subject to give young people a great start in life.

Resources to support the work of the SACRE have now been ring-fenced with a specific financial contribution from the County Council, and the commitment of all SACRE's members continues to be priceless. We depend on the goodwill of a very small central team who have an impact way beyond their number. The same is true of teachers and others working in our schools, many of whom face their own considerable pressures.

These are challenging times, but with challenges come opportunities to bring about change for the better.

It is an absolute privilege to serve as the Chair of the SACRE and to work with a group of dedicated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable members. Our meetings are enjoyable and constructive, and based on shared commitment to the promotion of the best possible provision of teaching and learning. We work in an atmosphere of mutual respect and celebrate what we can learn from each other by reflecting our increasingly diverse communities.

I want to thank all those who have helped us during the last year, and particular thanks go to my colleagues who make this task so worthwhile. It is also worth recognising the massive impact RE has on critical thinking among our pupils and students - and we should celebrate the pupils and students who find the subject a vital part of a well-rounded education.

On behalf of the SACRE, schools and the wider County Council, I want to pay tribute to Phil André – our “SACRE Star” – who has advised, guided and enthused us for many years. Phil is soon retiring, but I am sure he will keep an eye on us and make sure what we do reflects the passion he has for RE and the wider education and life learning opportunities within our County.

**Councillor Wayne Daley**

**Chairperson, the Northumberland SACRE**

### **Advice to Statutory Bodies**

The SACRE advised the local authority that, in order to fulfil its responsibilities adequately, consideration should be given to (a) allocating an agreed budget for the financial year, and (b) ensuring that the part-time RE Consultant is given an appropriate number of days per annum to meet his various responsibilities. Regarding the budget, the SACRE received assurances that all necessary and reasonable costs will be met centrally. Regarding the part-time RE Consultant, it was agreed that he would be remunerated for a maximum of 25 days on SACRE-related matters on behalf of the Local Authority for the financial year ending 31st March 2019. Moreover, it was agreed that he would be retained for a maximum of 25 days for the financial year beginning 1st April 2019.

The SACRE advised the Local Authority about schools where good or excellent work is undertaken in relation to RE and collective worship, and about schools where there is still room for improvement.

The SACRE emphasised that the current OfSTED inspection framework makes it almost impossible to draw firm conclusions about the quality of RE, collective worship or Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development. For some years now, inspection of subject teaching has been far less of an issue - although the SACRE appreciates that "[RE: realising the potential](#)", published by OFSTED in 2013, and "[Making a Difference](#)", published by the Church of England in 2017, have important and instructive things to say about how RE is taught nationally. The SACRE is delighted to report that RE and collective worship will be examined in greater depth by OFSTED under the new inspection regime from September 2019.

The SACRE made a few recommendations about training that might be offered to teachers in the academic year 2018-19. However, the SACRE recognises that some of the most effective training now and in the future will be provided to staff in individual schools, or to RE teachers in specific partnerships working through continuing professional development (CPD) programmes which they shape themselves.

### **Standards and Quality of Provision of RE**

The SACRE has monitored the quality of RE in various ways, including:

- public exam results (in particular, those at GCSE and A Level)
- feedback from individual SACRE members following visits to schools
- reports from the RE Consultant following visits to schools
- consultations with RE co-ordinators and heads of RE departments
- feedback from teachers attending training courses
- examples of good or best practice described in the termly SACRE Newsletter
- the albeit limited information deriving from OfSTED inspection reports

From September 2012, OfSTED began using a new inspection framework, with the result that inspection reports assumed a character and an appearance markedly different to the period up to that point. Up to August 2012, every inspection report contained a table in which different aspects of a school's work were assigned a grade. One aspect of a school's work assigned a grade was SMSC Development. Because RE has not benefited from inspection in community schools for a number of years, the grade for SMSC Development was, in nine cases out of every ten, the only light that OfSTED inspection reports shone on RE, albeit indirectly (SMSC Development is a whole school issue, although the SACRE accepts that RE has a special and perhaps unique contribution to make to such development).

From September 2012, only four aspects of a school's work were assigned grades in an inspection report: outcomes for pupils; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare; and effectiveness of leadership and management (to give them their present titles. A fifth aspect of a school's work was added later, early years provision, but this did not apply to all schools, obviously). Consequently, SMSC Development is no longer assigned a grade. This means that, since September 2012, inspection reports do not readily provide insights into SMSC Development, let alone RE. It is true that SMSC Development often secures a comment or two in an inspection report, but such comments are not present in them all. Moreover, as was discovered when an officer engaged in a trawl through some of the inspection reports for the period September 2014 to July 2015, most comments rarely said more than "Students' SMSC is promoted well in lessons" or "SMSC is addressed superficially". In consequence, OfSTED inspection reports no longer provide the means to draw reliable conclusions about the quality of SMSC Development within a local authority. The monitoring role of the SACRE has therefore been made more difficult than it was prior to September 2012. However, the SACRE is delighted that, with the new inspection framework that applies from September 2019, this situation should quickly change.

The SACRE is aware of the following in relation to RE in the county's schools. As the children get older, more mature and more sophisticated in their outlook, and as greater emphasis is placed on learning from rather than learning about religion and belief, teachers in middle, secondary and high schools experiment with less didactic and more open-ended and exploratory teaching and learning methods, ones designed to help create independent

learners who can engage with the evidence in a dispassionate and rational manner.

However, some OfSTED inspection reports, and anecdotal evidence supplied by SACRE members and others, reveal that some of the most innovative teaching and learning methods exist in our first and primary schools where every effort is made to approach the study of religion and belief in a cross-curricular manner. Such cross-curricular approaches emphasise that, for countless millions of people, religion and belief impact on many, if not all, aspects of life.

**RE GCSE Short Course**

In Summer 2019, no students in Northumberland sat the RE GCSE Short Course. When we take this and the data for 2018 into account, the transformation in the fortunes of the Short Course is of considerable interest. As we predicted in the annual report three years ago, “It cannot be long before the Short Course vanishes altogether.” It would appear that it HAS vanished altogether.

Just for the record, the outcomes for the RE GCSE Short Course from 2008 to 2019 are as follows:

2008: 1445 students, 94.5% (A\*-G), 37.8% (A\*-C)  
2009: 1467 students, 94.5% and 30.6%  
2010: 944 students, 92.4% and 26.7%  
2011: 901 students, 91.3% and 36.6%  
2012: 679 students, 78.0% and 25.2%  
2013: 649 students, 92.0% and 28.6%  
2014: 489 students, 90.0% and 52.1%  
2015: 579 students, 90.0% and 41.8%  
2016: 286 students, 99.0% and 53.7%  
2017: 124 students, 95.9% and 38.7%  
2018: 1 student, 100% and 0%  
2019: 0 students

### **RE GCSE Full Course**

Data released by the Department for Education (DfE) in February 2020 reveals that, in Summer 2019, 838 students in Northumberland sat the RE GCSE Full Course. The table below reveals that this is a marked decline on the number of students sitting the RE GCSE Full Course for the years 2015 to 2017, but roughly returns us to the situation in 2012. However, it is also a decline in the number of entrants in 2018.

Students no longer get grades A\* to G; instead, they are graded 9 (the top mark) to 1, with ungraded to follow. This necessarily means that comparing 2019's grades with years other than 2018's presents considerable difficulties, but, for the record, 17% got grades 9 and 8, 64.7% got grades 9 to 4 and 98.6% got grades 9 to 1 (ungraded = 1.4%). Despite the difficulties of equating the old grades with the new, students are performing better than in 2017 and slightly better than in 2018. Moreover, while only 18.6% of all students who sat GCSEs nationally studied an RE GCSE Full Course, in Northumberland 27.9% of such students did so. Students who sat the RE GCSE Full Course in Northumberland did marginally better than students nationally in terms of the two highest grades (17% secured the two highest grades in Northumberland but 16.6% did so nationally). However, they did less well in terms of grades 9 to 4 (64.7% secured the six highest grades in Northumberland but 71.4% did so nationally). There is good reason to celebrate some of these outcomes.

The figures for 2008 to 2019 are as follows:

2008: 788 students, 98.6% (A\*-G) and 66.2% (A\*-C)  
 2009: 470 students, 99.8% and 79.8%  
 2010: 532 students, 99.8% and 75.8%  
 2011: 565 students, 100% and 79.5%  
 2012: 873 students, 96.4% and 54.2%  
 2013: 966 students, 94.7% and 57.5%  
 2014: 1039 students, 96.7% and 54.5%  
 2015: 1436 students, 96.6% and 63.8%  
 2016: 1367 students, 96.4% and 62%  
 2017: 1225 students, 97.1% and 57.2%  
 2018: 929 students, 97.4% (grades 9 to 1) and 62.2% (grades 9 to 4)  
 2019: 838 students, 98.6% (grades 9 to 1) and 64.7% (grades 9 to 4)

Among Northumberland schools with a significant number of entrants for the Full Course (40 or more), notable results derived from:

- Bede Academy (166 entrants), where 68.1% of entrants secured 9 to 4 grades,
- Queen Elizabeth High (44 entrants), where 77.3% of entrants secured 9 to 4 grades,
- Ponteland High (201 entrants), where 60.2% secured 9 to 4 grades, and
- St. Benet Biscop RC Academy (185 entrants) where 68.6% of entrants secured 9 to 4 grades.



The total number of entrants for the RE GCSE Full AND Short courses means that, in the County as a whole, fewer students studied RE at GCSE in 2019 (838) than in 2018 (930). Moreover, the total number of entrants for 2019 was significantly down on every year from 2008 to 2017.

2008: 2233 students  
2009: 1937 students  
2010: 1476 students  
2011: 1466 students  
2012: 1552 students  
2013: 1615 students  
2014: 1528 students  
2015: 2015 students  
2016: 1653 students  
2017: 1349 students  
2018: 930 students  
2019: 838 students

We conclude that RE GCSE remains in an insufficiently healthy condition in many (but not all) Northumberland secondary and high schools.

While the insufficiently healthy condition of RE GCSE in the county as a whole to some degree reinforces the notable achievements at the schools singled out above, the following questions must be asked. Firstly, why has the popularity of RE GCSE declined so markedly since 2009 (EBacc cannot be the only explanation because EBacc came on-stream some years after 2009)? Secondly, what arrangements are made by the county's secondary and high schools to ensure that students NOT studying RE for an accredited GCSE course are benefitting from their statutory entitlement to an RE programme of study shaped by the content of the locally agreed RE syllabus?

**RE AS Level**

Data released by the DfE in February 2020 reveals that, in Summer 2019, 21 students in Northumberland sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics AS Level. 85.2% secured A-E grades and 24.6% secured A-B grades.

The figures for the seven years before 2019 are as follows:

2012: 38 students, 97.5% (A-E) and 25% (A-B)

2013: 45 students, 83.7% and 14%

2014: 44 students, 68.2% and 13.6%

2015: 165 students, 80.6% and 29.1%

2016: 150 students, 88% and 34%

2017: 60 students, 96% and 45%

2018: 31 students, 62.2% and 12.7%

2019: 21 students, 24.6% and 85.2%

The data indicate a marked upward trend in terms of performance when 2019 is compared with 2018, but performance still lags behind the very best years (e.g. 2016 and 2017). The decline in the number of entrants continues and is especially alarming when compared with 2015 and 2016. The number of entrants for 2019 is now at a lower level than for any year for which we have data. The number of students sitting the RS/Philosophy and Ethics AS Level is probably too small to allow for meaningful discussion about trends, but, just for the record, nationally, 36% of students got the two highest grades and 87.6% secured A-E grades.

**RE A Level**

Data released by the DfE in February 2020 reveals that, in Summer 2019, 52 students in Northumberland sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level. 100% secured A\*-E grades and 51.7% secured A\*-B grades. From 2008 to 2018, the number of students who sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level were 104, 107, 106, 101, 88, 70, 71, 95, 88, 81 and 63. The number of students who sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level in 2019 was lower than for every year for which we have data.

The comparable figures for the seven years before 2019 are as follows:

2012: 88 students, 98.9% (A\*-E) and 43.7% (A\*-B)  
 2013: 70 students, 100% and 34.8%  
 2014: 71 students, 100% and 33.8%  
 2015: 95 students, 100% and 35.8%  
 2016: 88 students, 98.9% and 43.2%  
 2017: 81 students, 99% and 43.2%  
 2018: 63 students, 98.8% and 23.1%  
 2019: 52 students, 100% and 51.7%

The number of students sitting the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level is probably too small to allow for meaningful discussion about trends, but we nonetheless note the following. The percentage of students securing A\*-E grades varies very little over the 2012 to 2019 period. However, the percentage of students securing the highest grades in 2019 (51.7%) was higher by quite some way than for any year for which we have data and the results in the county compare favourably with the situation nationally. Nationally, 50% of students secured the highest grades. Students who sat their RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level at The Duchess High and Cramlington Learning Village did very well, although the number of students involved was in both cases very small.

Some of the concerns expressed by the SACRE about the well-being of RE in our secondary and high schools for the last three to four years are confirmed by 2019's small number of entrants for RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level.

### **Training/Continuing Professional Development**

RE teachers can access training about RE by:

- contacting the Northumberland CPD College to arrange in-house RE training for an individual school, a cluster of schools, or RE co-ordinators/subject leaders in a partnership;
- contacting the part-time RE Consultant;
- contacting the North East Religious Resources Centre (NERRC);
- attending training events in neighbouring local authorities offered to teachers, etc. beyond their boundaries;
- attending the County's annual RE Conference.

During the academic year 2018-19, schools where training/in-depth consultations were undertaken included:

- 4 first schools
- 2 middle schools
- 1 special school.

Issues addressed during school-based training/in-depth consultations included:

- The content of the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus
- Revising RE long-term plans to better reflect the demands of the Agreed Syllabus
- RE and Assessment for Learning
- Ensuring feeder middle schools in a partnership teach the same topics to the same year groups
- Teaching Islam to all year groups
- Good visitors and places to visit.

Discussions with the NERRC suggest that no Northumberland teachers attended any of the RE-related courses provided by the Centre.

### **Pupils and Students Withdrawn from RE and Complaints about RE**

Parents can withdraw their children from RE and students aged over 18 can exercise the same right to withdraw. The SACRE is aware of only a small number of pupils and students who have been withdrawn from RE. Additionally, during the course of the year, no formal complaint relating to RE was received by the local authority.

### **The Agreed Syllabus**

A revised Locally Agreed RE Syllabus was ready for use in schools from September 2016. The new Agreed Syllabus is a major departure from the previous one insofar as the statutory components have been shaped by the RE syllabus framework contained in the Religious Education Council's "RE Review" of 2013. However, changes, other than largely cosmetic ones, were NOT made to the units of work themselves (teachers said that the units of work allowed for sufficient breadth, depth and flexibility, and therefore almost unanimously petitioned for their retention), but to the introductory and the guidance components which establish the broader context for RE in the contemporary era. This said, where the units of work justified their inclusion, teaching and learning ideas were provided so that study of the fundamental British values, extremism and radicalisation are possible, issues that have crept

onto the RE agenda only in recent years.

The current Locally Agreed RE Syllabus does not prescribe what teaching and learning methods teachers should use (although it does reflect on the variety of methods that teachers can utilise). Consequently, teachers select the methods they deem to be most appropriate, given the content addressed and the needs and the learning styles of the pupils and students concerned. Needless to say, as the children get older, more mature and more sophisticated in their outlook, and as greater emphasis is placed on learning from rather than learning about religion and belief, teachers in middle, secondary and high schools experiment with less didactic and more open-ended and exploratory teaching and learning methods, methods designed to help create independent learners able to engage with the evidence in a dispassionate and rational manner.

Although the current Locally Agreed RE Syllabus does not prescribe what teaching and learning materials must be used, the non-statutory guidance highlights a wealth of printed and electronic material which teachers may find useful. Moreover, the Agreed Syllabus contains advice about good resources that have come on stream in recent years. The termly SACRE Newsletter and RE CPD sessions are used to update teachers about more recently produced teaching and learning materials.

### **Collective Worship**

NCC's most recent "Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship" (ACWs) was formally launched in September 2006. It has not been updated because the advice it contains still complies with what is deemed by a majority within the RE community to be best practice (note how the judges for the Accord Award singled out the policy and guidelines for praise in 2017). However, a revision will be undertaken next academic year.

No formal complaint relating to collective worship was received by the local authority. Nor was the SACRE required to make a determination about the appropriateness, for either a school or a group of pupils or students in a school, of collective worship which is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

Taking the County as a whole, there are very few recorded instances of pupils or students withdrawn from ACWs. We take this as confirmation that most schools are therefore providing ACWs which achieve inclusivity by, among other things, taking full account of the rich diversity of religion and belief that exists in Northumberland. In other words, ACWs are provided in ways that are in sympathy with the needs and aspirations of the whole school community.

SACRE members and officers associated with the local authority have witnessed or taken part in ACWs that comply with the statutory requirements and/or the guidance in the local authority's "Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship".

### **Management of the SACRE**

#### *Staff*

The local authority has a School Improvement Partner (The Commissioner for Secondary Education) with ultimate responsibility for RE and collective worship, but such responsibility is merely one among many. Consequently, the local authority employs a part-time a consultant

to assist with matters relating to RE and collective worship. Democratic Services provides the SACRE with a clerk who not only minutes the meetings and fields correspondence, but also engages in a host of tasks designed to ensure that the SACRE can conduct its business in an enviably efficient and cost effective manner.

#### *Finance*

Regarding a budget, the SACRE has received assurances from the local authority that all necessary and reasonable costs will be met centrally (such resources are now ring-fenced).

#### *SACRE meetings*

The SACRE met on four occasions in the academic year 2018-19, on 10th October 2018, 16th January 2019, 10th April 2019 and 5th June 2019. On each occasion the SACRE was quorate with at least one member from each committee present. A majority of SACRE members, including the North-East Humanists' co-opted representative, were able to attend all or at least two SACRE meetings, thereby ensuring continuity and progression from one meeting to the next. To sustain links with the academies, a teacher from Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust, Duke's Secondary School had observer status.

We have commented elsewhere on matters to do with complaints and determinations as they relate to RE and collective worship. SACRE meetings were dominated by three issues: topical matters drawn to our attention by, among others, the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE); embedding the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus, which was ready for use in schools from September 2016; and, as a consequence of the success of the early 2017 briefings about the new RE syllabus, arranging an RE conference for teachers during the Autumn 2018 term. Additionally, a questionnaire about RE and collective worship was circulated to all schools in the County and the data that derived from it has provided the SACRE and the Local Authority with hard evidence about what is actually going on in classrooms and assembly halls. We are very grateful for all the teachers who collaborated in this important exercise. Interestingly, the questionnaire has been taken up by the SACREs in Newcastle and Darlington and, in the fullness of time, the data deriving from all three surveys will be presented in a single report covering the three local authorities. Such co-operation across Local Authority boundaries is heartening and the Northumberland SACRE is pleased to be leading on this exercise. At the end of the academic year, the SACRE agreed a set of questions about RE and collective worship that was sent to senior managers in every school to help ensure that RE and collective worship are given the attention they require and deserve. Feedback from senior school managers has already indicated that the questionnaire has focused minds on issues that do not always secure the attention needed.

#### **Contribution of the SACRE to the Wider Local Authority Agenda**

The SACRE contributes to the wider local authority agenda by:

- giving expression to equality, diversity, inclusion and community cohesion. It thereby makes a contribution to the local authority's public sector equality duty (note the broad, balanced and inclusive nature of the Agreed Syllabus and the "Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship"; articles published in the termly SACRE Newsletter; etc.)
- helping to raise standards in schools (note the content of the Agreed Syllabus; the termly SACRE Newsletter which highlights best practice; the support that individuals

associated with the SACRE provide to schools; the annual monitoring of public exam results; etc.)

- assisting with the annual HMD commemoration, an event for which it has “campaigned” for some years
- providing the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for teachers to provide high quality RE (note the provision of training; consultations via email about specific matters raised by teachers/schools concerning RE and/or collective worship; the termly SACRE Newsletter which highlights best practice; etc.)
- avoiding unnecessary and/or unreasonable costs at a time of considerable financial difficulty/austerity (note the arrangements for meeting costs agreed with the local authority; the relatively few days each year that the part-time RE Consultant works on behalf of the SACRE; the willingness of SACRE members to volunteer when tasks need completing on behalf of the SACRE; etc.).

### **Links with Other Agencies**

#### *National:*

- Membership of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).

#### *Local/Regional:*

- Close working relations exist with the NERRC
- Close working relations exist with the region's Free Church denominations and other religious and faith communities, some of which are represented on the SACRE (e.g. the Hindu/ISKCON, Jewish and Sikh communities)
- Close working relations exist with the Anglican and the Roman Catholic dioceses, which are
- represented on the SACRE
- Close working relations exist with the North-East Humanists, who are represented on the SACRE
- Individual SACRE members sit on other SACREs in the region, or are asked to attend other SACREs’ meetings to contribute to discussions and debates.

### **Summary of Other Relevant Information**

The SACRE continues to publish a [termly newsletter](#) which varies in length from 4 to 8 pages. The Newsletter keeps teachers, governors and others informed about the latest developments in RE and collective worship; highlights best practice within the county; identifies training options; provides early warning about important festivals and national and international events that schools may wish to discuss during RE lessons or collective worship; and alerts teachers about the most up-to-date RE resources. We are pleased to report that a few other SACREs in the region (e.g. Darlington, North Tyneside, Gateshead) have found it beneficial, either in the past or present, to experiment with similar exercises designed to promote best practice.

During the academic year 2018-19, the SACRE continued to work through its action plan (which was up-dated in January 2019) to ensure its work has structure and coherence (the action plan can be found in Appendix Two). Three or four years ago, the NASACRE singled out the previous action plan as one worthy of emulation. The current action plan covers the

period until December 2021.

The SACRE has a designated [webpage](#) (accessible via the Northumberland County Council website) where schools, teachers and governors can access the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus, the “Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship”, copies of all the SACRE newsletters and other relevant documentation.

Twice, discussions took place about how best to revitalise the SACRE membership to replace representatives who resigned for reasons associated with retirement or career progression.

Schools were encouraged to consider applying for the highly worthwhile [Accord Award](#) for Inclusive Schools, and attention was also drawn to the [RE Quality Mark](#) and the [Farmington Fellowships](#) for headteachers and teachers of RE/RS. Moreover, one of the SACRE's most comprehensive discussions revolved around the issue of what relationship the SACRE should sustain with the growing number of academies and free schools.

Members of the SACRE played a key role in the county's fifth Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) commemoration in January 2019.

The SACRE is heartened to find how many Northumberland schools organise visits for pupils and students to houses of worship and other facilities reflecting the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Britain, even though, in a county as large as ours, such visits often involve considerable expense and long-distance travel. The success of many such visits is shared with a larger audience via the termly SACRE Newsletter. It is also via the Newsletter that the SACRE most obviously confirms its commitments to equality, diversity, inclusion, community cohesion and promoting the fundamental British values.

The RE Conference in Autumn 2018 proved a great success, so much so that a decision has been reached to provide a similarly high profile CPD event every academic year. The conference delegates expressed most enthusiasm for organising a trip to Newcastle so teachers could visit different houses of worship prior to taking their pupils and/or students.

Joyce Miller's detailed and thought-provoking presentation in June 2019 about “Religion and Worldviews: the way forward” was much appreciated by the SACRE and inspired much discussion. It will be interesting to see the extent to which some of the ideas in the report translate into RE practice in the medium- and long-term.



**Appendix One:****Membership of the SACRE, plus the LA officers who attend, clerk and provide professional advice****(a) Representatives of Other Churches and Faiths**

Baptist Church	Represented by the United Reformed Church
Methodist Church (SE Northumberland Ecumenical Area)	Represented by the United Reformed Church
Roman Catholic Church	Mrs. J. Cousin
United Reformed Church	Reverend E. H. Marley OBE
Hinduism	Bhakti Rasa Adhikhara
Islam	Ms. M. Khan
Judaism	Mrs. D. Van Der Velde
Sikhism	Harpal Singh

**(b) Representatives of the Church of England**

Mrs. E. Bainbridge  
Mr. C. Hudson  
Mr. P. Rusby  
Rev. J. Scott

**(c) Representatives of the Teachers' Associations**

Mr. M. Davidson  
Mr. A. Duffield  
Miss F. Gannon  
Mrs. C. Naylor  
Mr. T. Nicholls  
Mrs. H. Shaw  
Ms. S. Walton

**(d) Representatives of the Local Authority**

Councillor D. Campbell  
Councillor W. Crosby  
Councillor W. Daley  
Councillor T. Thorne

**(e) Co-Opted Members**

Mr. S. Dearlove	North-East Humanists
Ms. M. Wardingham	Collingwood School and Media Arts College

**(f) Observer (Academies' Rep)**

Mr. S. Gibson, Principal, Secondary Years, Northumberland Church of England

Academy

**(g) LA Officers in Attendance**

D. Cookson	Commissioner for Secondary Education
P. André	Part-time RE Consultant
Andrea Todd	Clerk to the SACRE, Democratic Services

**Terms of Reference**

Terms of reference as per Circular 3/89, Circular 1/94 and legislation such as the 1988 Education Reform Act and the 1996 Education Act:

*“To advise the Authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in County schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the Authority may refer to the Council or as the Council may see fit.”*

**Appendix Two: The SACRE's Action Plan**

**Northumberland SACRE Action Plan January 2019 - December 2021**

- Key Element: Monitoring standards, quality and provision of RE.
- Rationale: To monitor, support and evaluate implementation of the locally agreed RE Syllabus, to monitor RE/RS examination results.

Objective	Action	Responsibility and date to be achieved	Cost	Success criteria/ outcomes	Date achieved
<b>To continue to disseminate information about the locally agreed RE syllabus</b>	Ensure that schools which MUST use the syllabus do so and know how to access its content	The SACRE, LA officers. Ongoing	Officers' time	All school that MUST use the syllabus do so and do so successfully  The syllabus is easily accessible via the SACRE webpage on the NCC website, and teachers and others can navigate the syllabus quickly and with ease	
<b>To support school staff as they implement the RE agreed syllabus</b>	Provide, help to organise or indicate from where support for RE (e.g. consultations, CPD, the annual RE conference) can be accessed by all staff in a school, or RE subject leaders/specialists in one or more schools	The SACRE, LA officers. Ongoing	Officers' time	All schools develop schemes of work which meet with the requirements of the syllabus.  Staff responsible for RE feel confident teaching the subject  The quality of RE improves in all key stages  Pupils and students enjoy RE and are challenged by it even more than at present  Schools consider applying for the RE Quality Mark	

<p><b>To monitor implementation and delivery of the RE agreed syllabus</b></p>	<p>Schools, anonymously if they so wish, are encouraged to submit examples of schemes of work to the SACRE</p> <p>LA officers report to the SACRE about delivery of the syllabus observed during visits to schools</p> <p>Encourage more schools to complete the survey about RE and collective worship circulated in Autumn 2018</p>	<p>LA officers. Ongoing</p>	<p>Officers' time</p>	<p>The amount of time allocated to RE conforms with the advice in the syllabus</p> <p>Evidence exists that schools are meeting their statutory duties in relation to the syllabus</p> <p>The SACRE is better informed about what is taught during RE lessons and how the subject is delivered</p>	
<p><b>To monitor results in RE/RS/philosophy and ethics exams</b></p>	<p>Examine RE/RS/philosophy and ethics exam results annually for short course GCSE, full course GCSE and post-16 courses, and compare such results with past results in the County, and past and contemporary results nationally</p>	<p>LA officers. Annually, (ideally Autumn term)</p>	<p>Officers' time</p>	<p>A report is submitted to the SACRE with accurate data, ideally in Autumn or Spring term, for exam results in the Summer before</p> <p>The SACRE has an accurate picture of the provision of RE/RS/philosophy and ethics exam courses and the success achieved by students in the County</p>	
<p><b>To monitor the number of pupils and students withdrawn from RE</b></p>	<p>Examine annually the number of pupils and students withdrawn from RE</p> <p>Consider why the number is high or low</p> <p>If appropriate, offer advice to</p>	<p>LA officers, the SACRE. Annually, (ideally Summer term)</p>	<p>Officers' time</p>	<p>A report is submitted to the SACRE with accurate data, ideally in Summer term</p> <p>Appropriate actions result from the report, perhaps including the provision of advice to schools about how to reduce the number of pupils or students withdrawn from RE</p>	

	schools about how they can reduce the number of pupils and students withdrawn from RE (e.g. via an article in the termly SACRE Newsletter)				
<b>In the academic year 2020 to 2021, complete the review of the RE agreed syllabus (retain it as it is, engage in limited/small-scale improvement, engage in substantive/large scale improvement)</b>	<p>Set up a working party which meets to make recommendations to the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)</p> <p>If necessary, the working party assumes responsibility for amending the existing syllabus</p> <p>If necessary, the new syllabus is officially launched (by July 2021)</p>	LA officers, the SACRE/ASC, the working party. By July 2021	Officers' time	<p>The existing syllabus is retained and schools notified about the decision, or:</p> <p>The existing syllabus is revised and schools notified about the launch date and by when the new syllabus must be fully implemented in schools</p>	

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- Key Element: Monitoring the provision and quality of Collective Worship in community, foundation and voluntary schools.
- Rationale: To audit Collective Worship provision and ensure good use is made of the 2006 NCC Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines.

Objective	Action	Responsibility and date to be achieved	Cost	Success criteria/ outcomes	Date achieved
<p><b>To monitor provision of collective worship in relation to the 2006 NCC Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines</b></p>	<p>Letter to all appropriate schools seeking confirmation that collective worship conforms with the advice in the 2006 policy and guidelines</p> <p>Encourage more schools to complete the survey about RE and collective worship circulated in Autumn 2018</p>	<p>Chair of the SACRE/LA officers. Annually, ideally by July 2019</p>	<p>Officers' time</p>	<p>The SACRE has a more accurate picture of collective worship provision in the County</p> <p>The SACRE/LA has evidence to confirm to what extent legislative requirements as they apply to collective worship are being met</p>	
<p><b>To encourage schools to share with each other (e.g. via the termly SACRE Newsletter) successful acts of collective worship (ACWs) complying with the 2006 Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines</b></p>	<p>Letter to all schools with appropriate information</p> <p>An article in the termly SACRE Newsletter about the 2006 Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines and sharing examples of successful ACWs</p>	<p>LA officers. May 2019, but ongoing</p>		<p>A number of model ACWs exist which can be disseminated among schools</p> <p>Collective worship is inspirational, of a consistently high standard and addresses diverse teaching and learning styles</p> <p>Opportunities for pupil and student participation in preparing and presenting collective worship are increased</p> <p>Collective worship is inclusive for all pupils and students whether they have a religious commitment or not</p>	

<p><b>To monitor the number of pupils and students withdrawn from collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, and to confirm that suitable alternative provision is made for such pupils and students</b></p>	<p>Examine annually the number of pupils and students withdrawn from such collective worship, and critically evaluate what alternative provision is made for such pupils and students</p> <p>Consider why the number of pupils and students withdrawn from such collective worship is high or low</p> <p>If appropriate, offer advice to schools about how they can reduce the number of pupils and students withdrawn from such collective worship</p>		<p>Officers' time</p>	<p>A report is submitted to the SACRE with accurate data, ideally in Summer term</p> <p>Appropriate actions result from the report, perhaps including the provision of advice to schools about how to reduce the number of pupils or students withdrawn from collective worship</p>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Key Element: The development of SACRE's role and work.</li> <li>● Rationale: To raise awareness of SACRE's role and responsibilities among schools and the local community.</li> </ul>					
Objective	Action	Responsibility and date to be achieved	Cost	Success criteria/ outcomes	Date achieved
<b>To comply with the SACRE's statutory responsibilities, on behalf of the LA</b>	Produce a 3-year SACRE action plan	The SACRE sub-group, The SACRE. July 2019		Raised awareness of the SACRE's role and responsibilities among SACRE members and the local authority as a whole	
<b>To continue producing a termly SACRE Newsletter for schools, which will include information about new RE resources and best practice in the County</b>	<p>Copy to be sent in the first instance to AT and PA, who will edit/proof-read/ compose, etc. copy for the Newsletter</p> <p>DC to liaise with in-house or external suppliers to publish the Newsletter</p> <p>The Newsletter to be circulated to all the usual recipients (SACRE members, schools, etc.)</p>	<p>The SACRE, LA officers. Copy TBA at least four weeks in advance of publication (publication is always early every term). Ongoing</p>	£390 per edition	<p>Awareness of the SACRE's role and responsibilities raised among teachers and governors</p> <p>Teachers contribute examples of good practice to disseminate via the Newsletter</p> <p>Good practice in relation to RE and collective worship is replicated in readers' schools</p> <p>The amount of copy produced by the editorial team is reduced as others, including teachers, contribute by writing articles</p>	
<b>To produce an annual report about the work of the SACRE for the DfE (Department for</b>	<p>The Chair and LA officers to collate information and write the report for the DfE, etc.</p> <p>On completion, the report to be</p>	The SACRE, LA officers. December annually	Officers' time	A statutory duty is met and good work carried out by the SACRE, NCC and the County's schools affirmed	



<b>Education), etc.</b>	circulated to all the usual recipients				
<b>To broaden the membership of the SACRE, thereby ensuring, a) all four voting committees have sufficient representatives for SACRE to be quorate, and, b) other stakeholders are represented through co-option or as observers</b>	The Church of England, other faith communities, Teachers' Associations and the LA to be approached for representation, as appropriate. Other stakeholders to be approached for representation as co-optees, as appropriate	The SACRE, LA officers. Ongoing		<p>The SACRE embraces a rich variety of religions and beliefs, and accesses the viewpoints of a wide range of stakeholders, all of whom seek to improve RE and collective worship in the County</p> <p>The SACRE enhances its knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to RE and collective worship</p> <p>The SACRE is kept informed about concerns, priorities, developments, etc. nationally as they relate to RE and collective worship</p>	
<b>To send a delegate to NASACRE's Annual Conference</b>	A representative of/officer associated with the SACRE volunteers to attend the Conference and to report to the SACRE about the main outcomes	May, annually		The SACRE is informed about concerns, priorities, etc. of SACREs nationally, and about the latest developments in relation to RE and collective worship	
<b>To arrange an occasional SACRE meeting in a school or academy rather than County Hall</b>	LA officers ask schools or academies if they would like to host a SACRE meeting	LA officers		The SACRE acquires first-hand insight into RE and/or collective worship in specific schools or academies, and the SACRE's profile is raised outside County Hall	
<b>To take appropriate action in relation to outcomes associated with the 2018 RE</b>	Documents relating to the conference, development day and survey are examined to extract from them possible	The SACRE, LA officers. January 2020 at the latest		Schools, etc. acquire confirmation that the SACRE/LA takes issues to do with RE and collective worship seriously by responding constructively to concerns they and others raise	

<p><b>conference (arrange a coach trip for teachers to visit houses of worship?), the 2018 SACRE development day (are there issues that still need addressing?) and the 2018 schools' survey about RE and collective worship (given the data, etc. acquired, what actions must follow?)</b></p>	<p>action points. A future SACRE meeting agrees what action will be taken re the most important/pressing action points</p>			<p>Knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to RE and collective worship are enhanced among stakeholders with interests in these important aspects of school work, SMSC included</p>	
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**Appendix Three:****Distribution List**

- All schools in Northumberland
- Director of Education and Skills/Head of Children's Services, Northumberland County Council
- Department for Education
- University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- University of Northumbria at Newcastle
- County Library Service, Northumberland County Council
- Northumberland's four MPs
- All Northumberland County Councillors
- The CE and RC Diocesan Authorities
- Karenza Passmore, North-East Religious Resources Centre
- Rev. David Herbert, United Reformed Church Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, NE1 8JJ
- Rev. Stephen Lindridge, Chairman of District, Methodist Church
- Mr. D. Lennox, Secretary of the Baptist Union, North East Region Interfaith Group in Newcastle
- North-East Humanist Association
- Harnham Buddhist Monastery, 2 Harnham Hall Cottages, Belsay, Northumberland, NE20 OHF
- The Board of Deputies of British Jews
- The United Hebrew Congregation, Newcastle
- The Newcastle Reform Synagogue
- Muslim Council of Britain, PO Box 57330, London, E1 2WJ
- Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations UK, 43 Dorset Road, Merton Park, London, SW193EZ
- NASACRE