

Torbay SACRE Annual Report 2016

Chair's introduction

2016 has been a year of transition for Torbay SACRE. Several members of the committee have left, for various reasons, including some who have given many years' service to the committee and have felt it was time to stand down. There has also been a transition in the Council representation, meaning familiar faces with many years' experience have moved on to new commitments. There has been change in other areas of the committee too. Continued illness of the RE advisor has meant David Hampshire continuing to play an important role through the year in providing papers and other material for meetings. Redistribution of roles within the council has meant the committee lost the help of Rosie Vowles as clerk. There was some time before clarity about a replacement was found.

However, as we look back over the year, we are in a much better place than when we started. David Hampshire remains pivotal in his supportive role, and we are now very fortunate to have Ed Pawson playing a supportive role to David. The financing of the role of RE Advisor is now precise and clear. There has been some progress in replacing lost members of the committee, so that we do not face being inquorate as in the past. There is now a clear understanding of roles and positions within the committee, including amongst those new members from the council. There is a commitment to provide training for new members soon.

The Chair is now confident that SACRE is well-supported both by advisors and by council staff, including the appointment of a new clerk. With budgeting now transparent and adequate, SACRE can continue to work in the interests of Religious Education across Torbay and develop new initiatives. The Chair has provided stability over the past three years, and has decided that now is the right time for a new Chair, Corrine Guntrip, to provide dynamic and committed leadership.

Andrew Strachan
Chair of Torbay SACRE 2016

Introduction and Context¹

Torbay is a small local authority on the English Riviera. It has thirty primary schools, of which thirteen are Voluntary Aided or Academies with a religious designation; and nine secondary schools, of which one is Voluntary Aided. There are also three Special schools in the Authority, no Pupil Referral Units and three

¹ The data from this section has been taken from:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2016>

independent schools. Increasingly, community and Aided schools have become Academies since 2010. According to government figures published in 2016 there were 1,889 pupils in two maintained comprehensive schools, 6,418 in secondary Academies (of which 2,981 were in selective Academies) and 159 pupils in Free Schools. There are also four community primary schools with 1,489 pupils, two maintained voluntary aided schools, 408 pupils, one Foundation school with 472 pupils and twenty-one academies with 7,756 pupils. This is significant in that two secondary schools and five primary schools have to follow the locally agreed syllabus, other schools are bound by their religious character or funding agreement. Similarly, only these schools have to take note of SACRE's advice to the local authority. This does not mean that the agreed syllabus and the advice of SACRE are not important for other state schools in the Authority but it does raise issues about the function of SACREs generally in a context where few schools are maintained by the Authority.

Whilst Torbay has a diverse population it has no single large minority ethnic group or large religious grouping other than Christianity. In the 2011 census 63.3% of residents identified themselves as Christian – slightly above the national average, 0.4% identified themselves as Muslim and 0.3% as Buddhist. Whilst 27.5% states they had no religion only 0.1% identified themselves as Atheist or Agnostic.

18.4% of primary pupils in Torbay are eligible for Free School Meals, as are 11.8% of secondary pupils. Notably 44.1% of Special School pupils are also eligible for Free Schools Meals – indicating that there are higher levels of poverty amongst the families of those with children who have severe and profound multiple learning difficulties.² In terms of language 94.2% of primary pupils have English as a first language and 95.5% of secondary pupils, with 5.7% and 4.4% having a language other than English as they first language. Less than 10% of Torbay's primary pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, this is true for less than 9% of secondary school pupils and less than 6% of Special School pupils. The impact of this on RE is not, at first obvious, but research³ would indicate that teachers attitudes to RE is shaped by their perception of need on the basis of class, ethnicity and identity. Where school populations are more mixed the indicator is that religious education takes on greater prominence. Teachers are more likely to identify RE as a key to building community cohesion irrespective of their own religious or belief backgrounds. This may be a significant issue for SACRE in the coming year.

Torbay shares, in part a locally agreed syllabus with Devon County Council and Plymouth City Council. The syllabus is available on the Torbay Council website.

² These percentages raise when put against performance tables by 1 – 2%

³ See the REDCo research project:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15507394.2010.513937>

Advice

To the local authority

SACRE'S main concern has been the support of SACRE. It has not had consistent clerking during the year, which has made it difficult to ensure that agendas and minutes have been in place for meetings. This is not to criticise the work of those tasked with clerking SACRE and Ms Rosie Vowles has been outstanding in her support for SACRE. Rather the issue has been with the lack of any commitment to providing on-going and stable support for SACRE. This issue has meant that SACRE has not been able to function properly, especially as the clerk is the main link with the local authority and the person who ensures that SACRE's adopted recommendations are fulfilled. Therefore, SACRE is requesting that the Torbay Council deal with this issue as a matter of urgency.

SACRE commissioned a report to look at religious education and collective worship in all of Torbay's state (non-Aided) schools as presented on their websites, in light of the government's expectation that all schools will have their curriculum and other significant policies available to the public. It was clear that there was little consistency of approach across Torbay, even where schools were part of the same academy chain. Given that parents have a right to know the curriculum offer of the school that their child goes to, or the school that they wish their child to go to, SACRE recommended that the Director of Children's Services take this matter up with schools in light of the Authorities responsibilities under the Children Act 2004. No response had been made to that request at the time of the writing of this report.

At the beginning of 2016 SACRE worked on the revision of its constitution. It presented its recommendation to the local authority and asked that it approved by the Authority's legal department. No response was received by SACRE.

SACRE representation at South West and National Meetings, of which Torbay SACRE is a member. Some concern was raised that members of SACRE were not able to attend meetings, regional or national, due to the uncertainty of expenses being paid by the Authority where SACRE had mandated a member to attend. This stemmed from SACRE having no clear idea as to how much was available to SACRE, and for what purpose, from the local authority's budget. This is a matter of on-going concern, one which the Chair of SACRE has taken up with the Minister for State in informal conversations. As such this is a matter for the local authority to resolve as a matter of urgency.

Since 2014 SACRE has been promised a webpage on the Torbay Council website, so as to ensure that its agendas, minutes, recommendations and advice are available to schools and to the public. At the time of the writing of this report no progress has been made since the last annual report.

To schools

SACRE has continued to support the Learn Teach Lead project and recommended that schools become involved. SACRE regularly received updates on the activities of the Torbay hub from the hub leader.

SACRE commissioned a report on the reporting of RE and collective worship in Torbay's non-aided schools. Its main findings were:

- Of the twenty-seven reports scrutinised none mentioned a failure to comply with the statutory requirements to provide religious education or a daily act of collective worship for all pupils not withdrawn by their parents as set out in the 1996 Education Act or in the funding agreements with Academies and Free Schools.
- Only two reports directly mention religious education as a curriculum subject.
- No report directly mentions collective worship, although a number refer to assemblies it is not possible to identify if they were also classed as collective worship or not.
- Where a school's provision for pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development is reported upon religious education is mentioned less often than Art, Music, English or PE in making a contribution to pupils' entitlement or development.
- SMSC and assemblies are linked in only three of twenty-seven reports, all primary school.
- Evidence used to illustrate inspection judgements made about a school's provision for SMSC appears weak in the reports under scrutiny.
- Where reporting on fundamental British values occurs there is no instance where this relates to RE or collective worship (assemblies).

SACRE shared this report with all schools, as it did the report on RE and collective worship on schools' websites. SACRE was concerned at the low level of reporting on RE and collective worship and took this up with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools and the Secretary of State.

SACRE also recommended to all schools that the advice of Dr Juss on the inclusion of non-religious world views in RE be ignored in light of government advice that this was a partial reading of the High Court judgement relating to the Secretary of State's comments on GCSE Religious Studies. The advice of Dr Juss was sent to all schools by the British Humanist Association. It was noted that teaching about non-religious worldviews is an expectation of the Torbay Agreed Syllabus.

SACRE, working with Learn Teach Lead RE, produced planning grids with learning outcomes for use by primary schools in Torbay based on two approaches to fulfilling the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. It also recommended that LTLRE further develop work on assessment to support the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus.

To government and other national bodies

SACRE was concerned about the government White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere. SACRE wrote to Secretary of State to highlight its concerns about government policy as set out in the White Paper and the possible impact of these policies on the preparation of RE teachers, both primary and

secondary, and the role and future of SACREs and ASCs in light of continued academisation and the proposed changing role of local authorities.

SACRE also wrote to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools with regard to the reporting about RE and collective worship as part of Section 5 inspections – as noted above.

SACRE also wrote to the Secretary of State asking for a review of the 2014 guidance that the Department for Education produced on what policies schools must publish on-line. It was clear that this advice was lacking in that there was nothing requiring schools to publish the parental right of withdrawal from RE or collective worship – something previously required under the requirements for school prospectuses.

Reponses received

SACRE has no record of responses received, it is believes that the issue with clerking is largely responsible for this situation.

Primary schools have responded positively to the guidance on planning. This was largely due to these documents being made available at Learn Teach Lead RE hub meetings during the year.

Standards and quality of provision of RE

Public examinations

GCSE Religious Studies (Full Course)

Nine secondary schools entered 880 candidates for GCSE Religious Studies in 2017 (compared to eight in 2015 when 817 candidates were entered for the same award). 64.8% attained A* - C compared to 57.1% in 2015 and 65.4% in 2014. Table 1 sets out a comparison of Torbay LA’s results with those of state funded schools nationally for Religious Studies.

Table 1: GCSE RS Full Course 2016 Torbay attainment compared to the UK

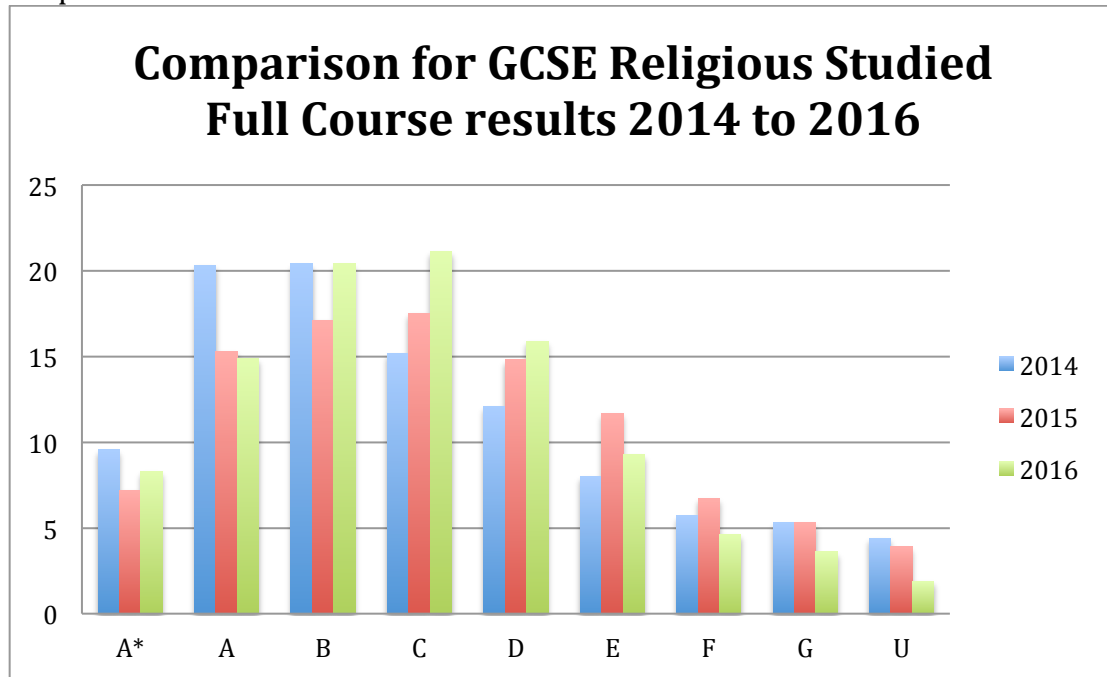
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Torbay	8.3	14.9	20.4	21.1	15.9	9.3	4.6	3.6	1.9
National	9.3	18.1	23.7	19.0	12.4	7.5	4.7	2.9	2.0

Table 1 sets out the results for England (state funded schools) and Torbay for Full Course GCSE RS. It should be noted that Torbay is well behind the national picture at A* - C (70.2% nationally with 64% locally, although this is an improvement on the 57% locally in 2015). This shows that there is still a lot to do to improve standards at Key Stage 4.

It is of note that the A* comparison between the national and Torbay cohorts is much closer than in previous years, and this is to be welcomed. In 2016, though, this has been at the expense of grades A and B. Hence, whilst there is clear that

there has been improvement in 2016 there is still work to do around the C/D and B/C grade boarders.

Graph 1



As can be seen from Graph 1 2016's results are still behind those of 2014 at A* and A, whilst comparable at B. In 2014 65.5% of candidates attained an A* - C grade compared to 64% this year. Therefore, the losses made in 2015 are being regained.

It is note, as stated above, more schools are entering more candidates for GCSE RS Full Course and this is to be welcomed.

GCSE Religious Studies (Short Course)

In 2016 only one school entered 10 candidates for GCSE Short Course RS compared to two schools entering 151 candidates in 2015. Therefore it is not possible to make any statistical analysis of attainment or comparison with national or historic data. This follows a national trend, which may see the end of GCSE Short Course in the next two years.

Importantly, all secondary schools in Torbay did enter candidates for GCSE Religious Studies of some kind, although some schools entered only part of the cohort for that year. 64.5% of the overall cohort for Torbay LA was entered but only three schools entered nearly a full cohort. This poses the question about what happens to the RE entitlement of those not following an accredited course.

A Level Religious Studies

Four schools entered 60 candidates for A Level Religious Studies compared to six schools and 152 candidates for A Level RS. This is a significant drop in entries when compared with 2015 and 2014, when 95 candidates were entered. Graph 2 sets out a comparison of results between 2014 and 2016 (below).

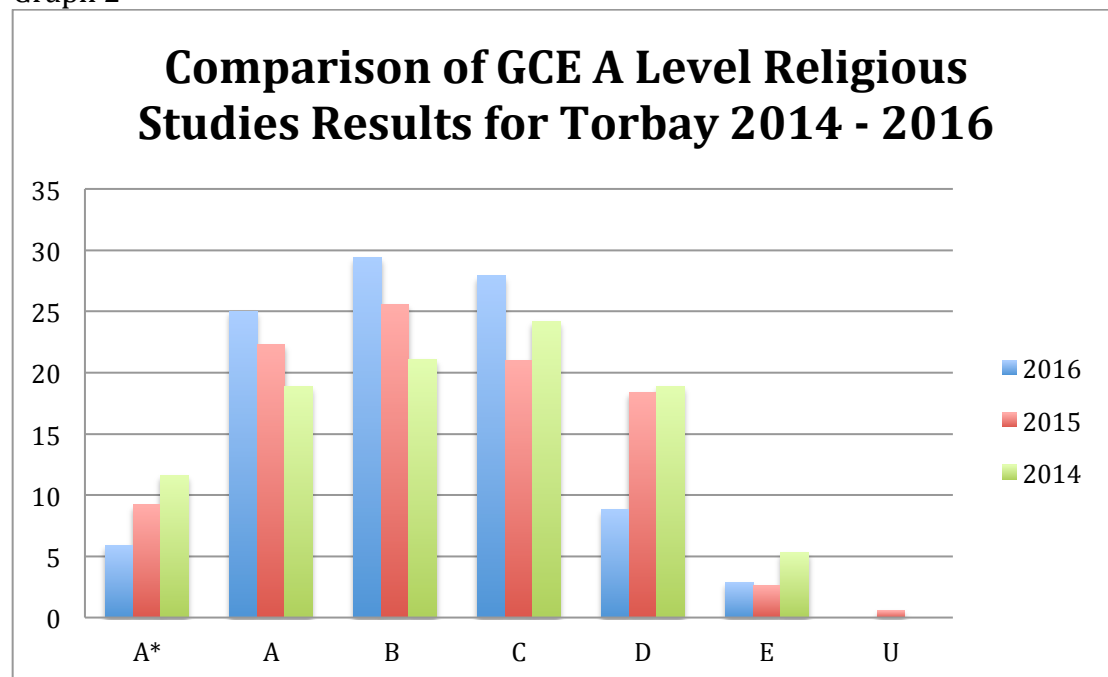
Significantly, the A* - B attainment in 2016 is an improvement on 2015 and 2014 – whilst the A* attainment is below that of 2015 (9.2%) and 2014 (11.6%). 60.3% of candidates in 2016 attained A* - B compared to 57.1% in 2015 and 51.6% in 2014. What is of note, though, that whilst the trend at A* - B is consistently upwards that at A* is consistently downwards. This has to be a concern and it would imply one of two possible scenarios. Firstly, that A Level RS is not attracting the most able students or, secondly, that teachers are unable to teach candidates to attain at A* - of course it may be a combination of both. Schools offering A Level need to take a close look at recruitment of students and how well trained their teachers are to deliver A Level specifications.

Table 3. GCE A Level Religious Studies 2015: Torbay compared to National attainment

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Torbay	5.9	25.0	29.4	27.9	8.8	2.9	0.0
National	5.6	18.5	30.3	25.5	13.7	5.0	1.4

It can be noted that Torbay candidates did better than their peers nationally at A* and A grades, and at A* - B overall, see Table 3 (above). This is welcome in light of the similar comparison made with GCSE Full Course in 2015.

Graph 2



AS Level Religious Studies

In 2016 79 candidates were entered for AS Level RE compared to 297 in 2015 and 29 in 2014. The tenfold increase in numbers is between 2014 and 2015 was unprecedented and reflected the nervousness of schools when it came to the new A Level specifications. Therefore, the 2016 entry level appears a normalisation of the pattern that would be expected. What is clear that only 20% of those who did AS Level RS in 2015 went on to do A Level in 2016.

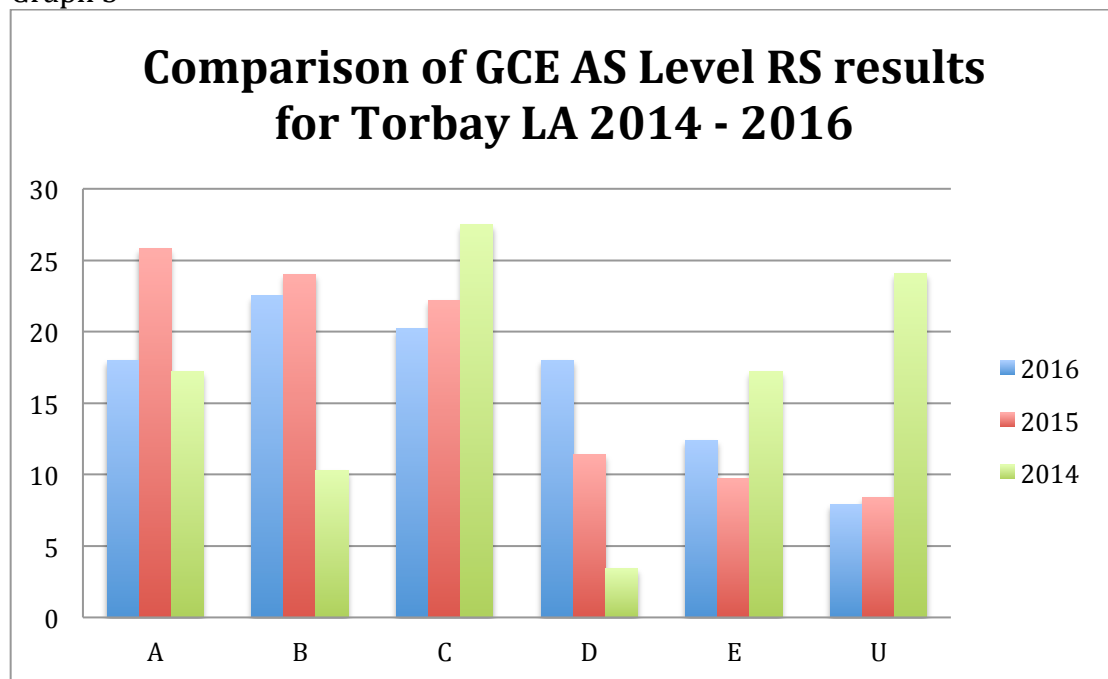
Table 4: GCE AS Level RS attainment 2015 Torbay compared with the UK

	A	B	C	D	E	U
Torbay	18.0	22.5	20.2	18.0	12.4	7.9
National	20.4	24.6	23.5	15.5	8.7	6.9

What is of concern is that Torbay LAs results were not only lower than the national A – C attainment results but is individually lower in each of the Grades A, B and C. Torbay also has a higher percentage of U grades when compared with that seen nationally.

Graph 3 sets out the comparative attainment for AS Level RS from 2014 to 2016. As can be seen there is no clear pattern emerging. It is of note though that the progress in between 2016 and 2014 (excluding 2015) shows an improvement in attainment at A and B. If 2015’s cohort is seen as peculiar – something that will only be noticeable over a five year period – then it is clear that progress is being made, even if the attainment is behind the national pattern of attainment.

Graph 3



Attainment in RE not covered by public examination

During the year under report it has not been possible to gather data on attainment in RE other than by looking at public examination results. This is an issue that SACRE is going to take further with the local authority who retain a responsibility for ensuring that all pupils have high quality education and are achieving the best they can.

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The quality of RE provision in schools

During 2015 SACRE asked the RE Adviser to present a report on religious education in the Ofsted reports of Torbay's schools and Academies (without a religious designation). That report was presented to SACRE in 2016 and forms part the 2016 Annual Report. Nevertheless, it has proved impossible to judge the quality of RE in these schools from Ofsted reporting. Hence, SACRE are not in a position to make a statement on the provision of RE in Torbay's schools at this point.

Withdrawal from RE

There is no indication that there is a significant issue with withdrawal from RE in Torbay's schools and Academies. SACRE did make schools and Academies aware that there were certain political groups agitating for parents to withdraw their child from learning about Islam. There is no evidence SACRE has seen to show that these moves had any significant impact in Torbay.

Complaints about RE

There have been no formal complaints presented to SACRE in regard to RE in maintained community or controlled schools.

Agreed Syllabus

If there was a review of the syllabus under report

The current Torbay Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education was adopted in 2015 and is shared, in part, with Devon County Council and Plymouth City Council. It is available on Torbay Council's website.

When the next review will take place

The next review of the agreed syllabus will occur in 2019 unless there is cause to review the syllabus before that date.

Collective Worship (with examples of good practice if appropriate)

Compliance with the statutory requirement

There is no evidence from Ofsted reports that community schools or Academies without a religious designation are not fulfilling the requirement to provide each pupil (not withdrawn by their parent) with a daily act of collective worship, which is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

Quality of Collective Worship

Whilst Ofsted reports did mention collective worship (assemblies) they made no comment on quality.

SACRE did, though, issue new guidance to school on collective worship. SACRE is grateful to Devon SACRE for allowing it to use its latest guidance as a basis for its own guidance.

Determinations

There have been no requests for a determination in 2016.

Complaints about collective worship

There have been no formal complaints presented to SACRE in regard to collective worship in maintained community schools.

Management of SACRE

Attendance at SACRE

On one occasion in 2016 SACRE was not quorate and there is concern that lack of key direction from the local authority is undermining the expectation that SACRE will function as a meaningful statutory body. SACRE is aware that the local authority was working hard to address this issue by the end of this reporting year.

Membership and training

No training was available to SACRE members during the year under report.

Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda

Identify what SACRE has contributed to other agendas

SACRE has been keen to engage with the local authority around its Prevent duty and that of schools and Academies within Torbay.

SACRE will be taking this aspect of its work forward in 2017.

SACRE's contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty

SACRE has been acutely aware of the vulnerability of Muslims in Torbay as a result of the international situation and terror threat. SACRE is continuing to look for ways to support the Muslim community in Torquay and those not attached to that community. In light of the decision of the EU Referendum SACRE is aware of the increased vulnerability of those from visible ethnic and religious minorities and will continue to monitor this situation.

What SACRE has done to support schools through events and training

SACRE has supported schools through its support of Learn Teach Lead RE and the primary and secondary hubs within Torbay. SACRE has put forward a proposal to the local authority with a view to offering training opportunities for schools. Conferences for primary and secondary RE teachers, in cooperation with Devon are planned for 2017.

Links to broader community initiatives

In previous years SACRE has received reports from the Torbay Inter-Faith Forum and is looking for ways to re-establish those links in 2017.

Summary

This has been a difficult year for SACRE. The situation with clerking, the support of the local authority and the lack of clarity about SACRE's budget was cause frustration. There has also been a difficulty with SACRE being quorate, although this has been managed. It is clearly the local authority's responsibility to ensure that there are sufficient members of SACRE in each group and that there is commitment from those appointed to ensure that SACRE functions within its statutory remit.

Nevertheless, SACRE has produced advice, it has had high quality discussions and despite everything it has managed to meet as required by its constitution.

Membership of SACRE, local authority officers who attend, clerk and professional advice

Group A: Christian denominations other than the Church of England and other religious traditions

Mrs Sylvia Kennedy	Roman Catholic
Rev Peter Killick	United Reformed Church
Mr Yousif Al-Nassar	Torquay Islamic Centre
Mr Chaz Singh	Sikh Community

Group B: the Church of England

Rev Ian Blyde (Vice Chair)
Mrs Charlotte Calouri
Mrs Corrine Guntrip
Rev Angela Sumner

Group C: Teacher Associations

Ms Claire Entwistle	NAHT
Mrs Heather Savini	UCU
Mr Andrew Strachan (Chair)	ATL

Group D: the Local Authority

Cllr Jane Barnby	Conservative
Cllr Jackie Stockman	Independent
Cllr Di Stubley	Conservative

Co-opted members

Mrs Jan Mughrabi	Baha'i Community
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Officers

Mr David Hampshire	Adviser
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