

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Shropshire Annual Report



August 2019 – August 2020

Introduction

Despite having to cancel our March meeting due to Covid19 and lock down, Shropshire SACRE continues to make good progress.

Support from the LA continues to be strong. Elected members are always represented at SACRE meetings . Following the retirement of our previous LA adviser, Alun Morgan, the officers and the commissioning team worked well with myself to ensure a smooth transition to developing a contract with RE Today for

- 1) supporting the work and meetings of SACRE,
- 2) delivering professional development meetings with primary and secondary teacher networks, as well as
- 3) being LA preferred delivery agent for school based professional development and support which is bought in by the school.

This approach is working very well and ensures a consistent message to, and agenda for, SACRE, teachers, schools and the LA.

Teacher members of SACRE have played a significant role in encouraging teachers to attend network meetings, as well as writing support materials for the Collective Worship project and developing a list of contacts of community members who are willing to give input to schools on their particular faith or world view stance.

Although times have been challenging this year, faith and humanist members have continued to give generously of their time to schools to improve teaching and learning whenever possible.

Finally, the national perspective brought by members of the RE Today team today have not only ensured that all SACRE members are very well informed and are very well placed to support schools at a time of much change in the national Agenda, especially in addressing the curriculum explorations by visiting OFSTED inspectors. This input has ensured that ALL SACRE members have responded well to the opportunity to have quality discussions of RE and Collective Worship issues at meetings.

Henry White

Chair of Shropshire SACRE

Section 1. Advice to Statutory Bodies

a. Shropshire Local Authority

It has been difficult to meet during the second half of the academic year due to the pandemic but best efforts have been made to have virtual meetings where possible and appropriate. The Chair of SACRE has met on a termly basis with senior officers of the local authority to monitor and discuss future relationships in the light of continuing budget restrictions. These have been productive meetings and have maintained the local authority's awareness and continuing commitment to fulfil its statutory role in supporting SACRE.

b. Schools

The termly network meeting have been reinvigorated and extremely well attended. Evaluations of the usefulness of these meetings have been very positive.

The network meetings for both primary and secondary schools have had a real focus on improving subject knowledge and the changing priorities of OFSTED and how these relate to RE. The network events ensure that subject leaders, teachers and heads of RE get to hear of best practice both within and beyond Shropshire.

This network is also an essential window for SACRE into the needs and opinions of teachers in the classroom. There are standing agenda items on all SACRE agendas for update information on the work of schools be exchanged and discussed. Within the network the work of SACRE is also shared where relevant.

c. Responses to the above

Discussions with the local authority have been positive throughout the year, and feedback from them have been agenda items for all termly meetings so that all members have been kept fully informed of developments. The attendance of the SACRE teacher representatives at the termly network meetings supports the link between SACRE and schools.

Section 2. Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

a. Public examinations 2019

The 2019 data provided by the local authority was anonymised which made it a little difficult to report fully on the provision of GCSE RS across Shropshire schools.

There were 2925 pupils in the year 11 cohort in 2019 of these 733 sat full course RS GCSE. It is pleasing to see that in 15 of the 20 secondary schools in the local authority some students sat an exam, although this is a drop from the 16 schools that had students take an exam in 2018. On a positive note this is an increase from the 686 students who sat the exam in 2018.

Standards varied across the schools. The national percentage of students achieving 9-5 was between 57% and 60% dependant on exam board. School percentages achieving ranged from 89.7% of students achieving 9-5 to 35.1% of pupils achieving 9-5 in their examinations. 10 schools exceeded the national average of 9-5 grades for their exam board.

Three exam boards were used by schools, AQA, Edexcel and Eduqas. In future SACRE intend to look more closely at RS provision for pupils who are not sitting an exam. SACRE will also seek to ensure that those leading schools understand that all students (unless withdrawn by their parents) must receive RE even if they are not taking an examination.

In comparison to national figures in the exam boards used in Shropshire the overall 9-4 grade figure compares well with 72.3% of pupils achieving this in Shropshire compared to 70.3% nationally. Only three schools entered a single student for GCSE RS short course in 2019.

At A Level we were not given data to enable us to comment on either entries or standards.

b. Public examinations 2020

Due to the unprecedented situation in schools and for students it is not appropriate comment on entries or results at GCSE or A level for the 2020 cohort.

It was pleasing to see how amazingly hard teachers worked to ensure that students received an appropriate centre assessed grade that reflected the work of the students.

c. Attainment in RE not covered by public examinations

It remains difficult for SACRE to obtain detailed information to answer this aspect of the report. Anecdotal evidence gathered through discussions at the primary and secondary network meetings only gives a broad impression. Later in the report there is commentary about the Agreed syllabus that covers this more fully.

d. The quality of RE provision in schools

From discussions at termly network meetings, provision of RE in both primary and secondary schools remains positive, particularly in those schools who are regular attenders. Support for schools this year, particularly in Primary meetings, has focussed on the development of subject knowledge and the work on curriculum needed as a result of the new Ofsted framework for inspection.

This has led to a number of concerns expressed by a number of teachers that the current agreed syllabus does not support them to teach RE well. The current syllabus uses outdated and outmoded language such as learning about and from religion.

These concerns have been shared with SACRE and the November 2020 meeting of SACRE will address this issue. to look more closely at curriculum provision more broadly than the current focus on outcomes for pupils.

e. Training provided to schools

Term	Primary Focus	Secondary Focus
Summer 2019	Practical strategies: using images in RE Teaching Islam: case studies	Active learning strategies
Autumn 2019	Intent and Implementation in RE: RE and the Ofsted Inspection framework	Getting pupils into texts
Spring 2020	Subject Knowledge in RE: Teaching about Hindus and Jewish People	Teaching Christianity and Islam; examining the diversity of non-religious worldviews
Summer 2020	Impact in RE: RE and the Ofsted Inspection framework	RE, learning and the brain: helping students to remember what they learn

f. Withdrawal from RE

As far it is possible to tell there continue to be low levels of parental withdrawal from RE. There are very low levels of complete withdrawal and these are handled well by schools. The use of partial withdrawal by parents, sometimes at short notice, continues to cause problems for schools. These are often, but not exclusively, related to the teaching of Islam.

Shropshire teachers in conversations suggest that parents are particularly concerned around visits to places of worship, especially Mosques. This reflects the national picture as reflected in the latest NATRE Primary survey.

g. Complaints about RE

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

Section 3. The Local Agreed Syllabus

As is made clear in section 2 the refreshed Agreed Syllabus is not supporting schools, particularly primary schools, to provide high quality RE for pupils. Having sought opinion from schools through the network meetings SACRE decided in the March 2020 meeting to begin a syllabus review. The pandemic meant that this was unable to be taken forward but is now on the agenda for a decision to be made in the November 2020 meeting.

Section 4. Collective Worship

a. Compliance with the statutory requirements

There have been no instances brought to the attention of SACRE or of individual members of non-compliance issues regarding collective worship. The survey carried out some years ago indicated that primary schools complied with requirements very well. With nearly all secondary schools in Shropshire now either stand-alone academies or part of wider Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) the flow of information to SACRE is much reduced. Secondary religious education leaders are very clear that collective worship is not part of their remit and so it remains difficult to establish communication channels to establish the situation across the secondary sector.

b. Resources on collective worship

SACRE have worked closely with members of local religion and belief communities supported by a grant from the Westhill trust to provide a series of resources for use in both collective worship and to support pupil subject knowledge around several different religions and worldviews. Plans to launch these in the Spring and then the summer term had to be postponed due to Covid- 19.

c. Quality of collective worship

For the same reasons as outlined in 4c above it is becoming increasingly difficult for SACRE to gather information relating to the quality of collective worship in schools.

d. Determinations

SACRE has not received any approaches for determination from its schools.

e. Complaints about collective worship

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

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

a. Attendance at SACRE by committee

Attendance throughout the year has been good with all committees represented at all meetings. Members of SACRE who teach in schools and members of SACRE who regularly visit schools provide a good view of the concerns of teachers and the support required by schools. This was particularly useful when addressing the OFSTED inspection framework and the Agreed Syllabus.

b. Partnership with RE Today

In April 2019 due to the retirement of the long serving RE adviser RE Today were asked to provide advisory support to SACRE and training for primary and secondary schools. This support is provided by Fiona Moss and Stephen Pett.

c. Membership and training

It is important to note that through the various roles SACRE members have in their day to day lives, plus their links and contributions to network meetings, school visits and wider community groups Shropshire SACRE has a good working knowledge of its schools. There is a regular update from all those that work in schools or visit schools on every SACRE agenda. Membership remains strong and representative of the local community, well supported by the respective diocese and the local authority in challenging circumstances. New members have an induction process consisting of information relating to the work of SACREs and a copy of the latest annual report to illustrate the work of the local SACRE, and usually a meeting with the SACRE chair or RE adviser who supports SACRE to talk through the above documents and outline procedures and work practices.

d. Complaints about RE and Collective Worship

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

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

a. Identify what SACRE has contributed to other agendas.

The RE Advisers, Stephen Pett and Fiona Moss who run the termly primary and secondary subject leader network meetings. They work closely with the RE community nationally and are involved in national curriculum development initiatives. Fiona Moss also works as CEO of NATRE and in this role has close links with OFSTED. There are strong links to the school Individual SACRE members have close links to local Inter Faith forums where they carry out significant contributions to social cohesion initiatives.

b. SACREs contribution to the LA's public sector equality duty.

Of the three aims of the General Equality Duty, namely eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations SACRE's work has offered most to eliminating discrimination with work on portraying Religions and worldviews appropriately.

c. What SACRE has done to support schools through events, training and resources.

The collective worship project has stalled in its development due to a number of factors. It is hoped that this project will be finished and be used in schools very soon.

SACRE have provided a flier on visitors into school and visits to places of worship. This has been shared with schools.

A standing agenda item is for SACRE members to report back on their involvement with schools and this is providing a clear picture of considerable and well received involvement of nearly all SACRE members in individual schools across the county and across the phases. This involvement covers both curriculum RE and collective worship. In addition, school visits to local places of worship are increasing.

Section 7. Summary

SACRE is working hard to provide support to schools as education changes and in the light of changes in the OFSTED inspection framework.

We are pleased that professional development for teachers was able to carry on through teams when teachers had to work from home during the lockdown period. A focus for the next year is to provide schools with an agreed syllabus to support curriculum progression and pupil subject knowledge.

Annex A

Shropshire GCSE Results and Trends against National Figures

GCSE Results

	2017			2018			2019			2020
	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	LA	National	Gap	Comparison of results not appropriate due to the use of centre assessed grades
A*-C	71.3	71.2	+0.1							
9-4				72	69.9	+2.1	72.3	70.3*	+2	
9-5							59.5	58.5*	+1	

*National average of the three exam boards used in Shropshire schools (state school average used)

ANNEX B – Shropshire SACRE Membership 2019-20

Committee A - Other Christian Denominations/Other Faiths

Mrs Denise Samari	Baha'i
Mrs Jacqui Osmund-Smith	Baptist
Mrs Rashmika Jogi	Hinduism
Imam Sohayb Peerbhai	Islam
Mark and Sue Michaels	Judaism
Mr Henry White	Methodist Church
Mr Bill Morris	Orthodox Churches
Mr David Bowgett	Religious Society of Friends

Committee B – Church of England

Hereford Diocese

Mr Tristram Jenkins
Mr Mark Harrington

Lichfield Diocese

Mrs Fiona Iddon
Mrs Jane Crouch

Committee C – Teacher Associations

Elizabeth Badger	Secondary Teacher
Adrian Black	Secondary Teacher
Mike Reynolds	Primary Teacher
Cathy Rutherford	Primary Headteacher
Stephanie Shirra	Primary Teacher
Amanda Skidmore	Primary Headteacher

Committee D Shropshire LA Members

Cllr Mrs Pauline Dee
Cllr Mr Roger Evans
Dr Simon Nightingale Humanist

Clerk to SACRE

Advisers to SACRE

Minuting Clerk

Sue Round
Fiona Moss and Stephen Pett
Helen Woodbridge