

**THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY
COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

2015 – 2016

September 2015 – August 31st 2016

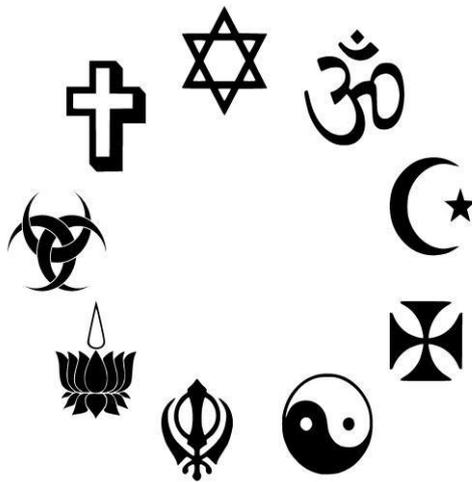


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FOREWORD BY Jenny Dixon

CHAIR OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SACRE 2015-16

The Annual report of the Northamptonshire Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) covering the time from September 2015 to 2016.

When I took over as chair in September 2015, SACRE had no Religious Adviser. My stated aim was to keep the SACRE together somehow in a time of instability until a new R.E. adviser was appointed and SACRE could resume its normal duties.

SACRE has held four meetings during the time covered by this report – The AGM in September 2015, an emergency one in November 2015 to approve the annual report for presentation to full Council, and another meeting in March 2016 and the last one in June 2016. SACRE was quorate for all four meetings.

I want to place on record my thanks to all the members of SACRE for their support through this time. On behalf of members of SACRE I would also like to extend the SACRE's good wishes to representatives who left SACRE either to move on to pastures new or to retire and to thank them for their work on SACRE.

My welcome goes to Amanda Fitton, the new R.E. adviser, jointly with Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, and wish her all the best in setting us on a new course for the coming years.

SACRE has to meet the challenges of political changes at Government level and the impact on the Department of Education and OFSTED and the development of new strategies. SACRE's remit for Religious Education only extends to the

Northamptonshire LA schools. At the March 2016 meeting of SACRE, I asked members to consider how to involve Academies and Schools of other designations in SACRE activities.

This year SACRE will also have to set in motion the process to design a new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for the LA schools in the county and would hope that schools, whatever their designation, would feel able to contribute to this process.

I want SACRE to have a strong voice for the future of children of faith and no faith in the development of their skills and knowledge of Religious Education within Northamptonshire and I look forward to the many challenges ahead and to working with Amanda Fitton, the new LA Religious Education adviser.

I commend this report to you.

Jenny Dixon
Chair, Northamptonshire SACRE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Religious Education is an important curriculum subject. It is important in its own right and also makes a unique contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils and supports wider community cohesion. The Government is keen to ensure all pupils receive high-quality Religious Education.

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

This entails:

- advising the Local Authority on Religious Education given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
- monitoring the provision and quality of Religious Education taught according to its Agreed Syllabus, together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus;
- providing advice and support on the effective teaching of Religious Education in accordance with the locally Agreed Syllabus;
- providing advice to the Local Authority and its schools on methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training;
- in partnership with its Local Authority, considering whether any changes need to be made in the Agreed Syllabus or in the support offered to schools in the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus, to improve the quality of teaching and learning of RE;

- Offering advice to the Local Authority, and through the Local Authority to schools, concerning how an existing Agreed Syllabus can be interpreted so as to fit in with a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum.

THE WORK OF SACRE DURING 2015-16

The Local Authority has continued to support the work of SACRE through funding that provides a clerk for the meetings and the part funding of a new adviser role in partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local Authorities.

SACRE sought legal advice from the Local Authority and created and implemented its constitution which was ratified at a subsequent meeting and will be available on the SACRE website and so publicly available.

Every Local Authority has to convene a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Northamptonshire SACRE, which has met four times this year, comprises four statutory groups.

The four groups that make up SACRE are as follows:

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

Between September 2015 and July 2016 there were four SACRE meetings held;

- Tuesday 15th September 2015 - Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gudwara, 17-19 St. Georges Street, Northampton, NN1 2TN
- Tuesday 10th November 2015 - The Judges Lodgings, County Hall, Northampton, NN1 1ED
- Wednesday 9th March 2016 - The Blue Room, County Hall, Northampton, NN1 1ED
- Wednesday 8th June 2016 – Room 224, County Hall, Northamptonshire, NN1 1ED

Details of the agenda items and minutes of the meetings can be found on the Northamptonshire SACRE website.

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/educationandlearning/services/sacre/pages/religious-education.aspx>

Attendance was good and all meetings were quorate, though without the support of an RE adviser the group think that there is work to develop a wider level of real engagement both at committee level and with our schools. SACRE is keen to work with the new RE adviser.

NASACRE AGM

Reverend Philip Davis went to the NASACRE AGM in London on behalf of Northamptonshire SACRE. He took notes on the main areas of debate and these were reported back to SACRE in the first meeting of September 2016.

PREVENT

Nicola Scott, Service Manager for Educational and Inclusion Partnership attended the June meeting and spoke about the Prevent strategy in Northamptonshire which was positively received.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS

There have been no formal complaints made to the Local Authority.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

SACRE fully support the importance of this as it contributes to the ethos and social cohesion of a school. We recognise that Collective Worship can enhance the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.

DETERMINATIONS

The 1996 Education Act (section 394 – 1) empowers a SACRE to grant the request of a head teacher for alternative Collective Worship, where it is considered that the nature of a pupil population makes it inappropriate to be wholly or mainly Christian.

In the year of this report, the SACRE has not received any requests from schools for a determination.

RE ADVISER

A new RE adviser, Amanda Fitton, was appointed and started her role as of July 2016. She will be working in partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils. Her role will be to support and advise SACRE and all schools in Northamptonshire. This will include advising on teaching and learning of RE in schools through training opportunities and sharing good practice through network meetings with all schools in Northamptonshire as well as supporting SACRE members. The new adviser has already identified a number of key areas for development which are detailed in the report and will form the basis of an action plan which SACRE will consider and approve at their next meeting and then monitor.

INITIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (which SACRE will consider at their next meeting on Tuesday 6 December 2016)

SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-17 INCLUDE:

1. To ensure wider understanding and engagement of all parties in the work of SACRE and the delivery of RE in our schools

All committees need to have full representation. The different faith groups need to be contacted and encouraged to engage with SACRE. The same is also needed for teacher representatives but with a new RE adviser being more proactive with Northamptonshire schools the role of SACRE will become more prominent and effective. The identified key points will become priorities of the Northamptonshire SACRE Development Plan for 2016 -17 if approved by SACRE.

Over the last year there have been no LA supported network meetings or training opportunities for teachers or other professionals in any Northamptonshire schools. The Agreed syllabus for Northamptonshire will by September 2016 run its five year course and need to either be updated or rewritten in line with current teaching practices and pedagogy.

2. To review the Agreed syllabus to provide a clear framework for the delivery of RE in our schools and improve outcomes

With the appointment of a new RE adviser to reintroduce network meetings for all Primary and Secondary schools in Northamptonshire. This will help the spread of good practice, open up school partnerships and help deliver further Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and to re-establish training programmes that will help deliver more outstanding RE in Northamptonshire schools. The agreed syllabus is due to be reviewed as from Sept 2016 and this will need an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to be set up separate from the SACRE. This will have a period of agreed time to produce a new syllabus that will need approval of the whole SACRE. It will need to reflect the changing demographics of Northamptonshire and society but still ensure that good and outstanding RE is taught in all schools.

The gathering of accurate data has been particularly problematic this year, partly due to national changes in assessment without levels, curriculum changes and SAT and exam changes. Schools no longer automatically provide their RE data.

There are still areas for development for all Key Stages and these are highlighted below and will again become priorities of the development plan for 2016-17;

3 Areas for Development

a) Areas for Development for KS1:

- Increase opportunities for children to visit places of worship and/or invite a wider range of visitors into school assemblies and lessons
- Increase children's understanding of the different religions within their locality
- Address the widening gender gap for the most-able pupils by ensuring all children are challenged within lessons
- Improve the quality and quantity of R.E resources and use of IT in lessons
- Ensure R.E is assessed more regularly and more robustly.

b) Areas for Development for KS2:

- Increase opportunities for children to visit places of worship and/or invite a wider range of visitors into school assemblies and lessons
- For pupils to learn about a wider range of religions
- Address the widening gender gap for the most-able pupils by ensuring all children are challenged within lessons
- Improve the quality and quantity of R.E resources
- Increase the opportunities for extended writing within each unit of work

- Increase opportunities for first hand experimental learning, including the opportunity to meet people with different beliefs from the local community
- Develop the CPD for whole staff to develop the consistency of quality teaching and subject knowledge
- Ensure R.E is assessed more regularly and more robustly
- Ensure good practice within schools is shared more frequently
- Increase the use of IT to record work rather than just for researching facts

c) Areas for Development KS3:

- Raise the interest of boys in R.E and for the wider school community to also value the subject more.
- Improve the writing skills of boys and improve extended writing skills for all pupils
- Develop greater independence in learning
- Increase experiences of non-Christian faiths
- Greater consistency between teaching groups
- Challenge for the most able pupils

d) GCSE/A Level

There was no data available for the A level and GCSE results for the summer of 2016.

The new adviser has suggested that the following would be key areas of development to help raise attainment at all key stages and in formal examinations.

- Network meetings need to be resumed and teachers from all secondary schools in the county encouraged to take part.
- Good practice needs to be shared with in the schools particularly from schools where the results were in line or above national average.
- A clearer picture of the results across the county needs to be ascertained to identify where help is perhaps needed and where good practice lies.
- There also needs to be a training/CPD sessions offered to teachers to help support them with the new syllabus and teaching methods.

I, Justine Davies, the new Chair of SACRE endorse the Annual Report 2015 - 2016 and recommend it to Council.

If you have any comments about this report, please contact the Northamptonshire

SACRE Clerk via e-mail at sacre@northamptonshire.gov.uk