

Report to: Peoples Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 7 March 2019

By: The Chairperson of the East Sussex SACRE

Title: Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE)

Purpose: To update Members on the role and work of the East Sussex SACRE

RECOMMENDATIONS

The People's Scrutiny Committee is recommended to comment on and note:

1) The work of SACRE in supporting schools and improving the quality of religious education, especially in maintained Secondary schools

2) The three year Development Plan for SACRE

1 Background

1.1 The role of SACRE

Since 1988 Local Authorities have had a statutory duty to establish a Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education.

2 The duties of SACRE

2.1 It is the duty of SACRE to advise the Local Authority (LA) on matters relating to religious education, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

2.2 It is the duty of the LA to provide a locally agreed syllabus for religious education which must be reviewed every five years. Religious Education is a statutory element of the curriculum for all pupils which is determined locally. Academies are not obliged to follow the agreed syllabus but must provide religious education.

2.3 The Education Act 1996 requires SACRE each year to publish a report on standards in its schools and the actions taken during the year.

3 How SACRE works

3.1 SACRE meets each term and includes representatives from elected members who are appointed at the Annual Council meeting in May. Members places are currently allocated on a proportionate basis (3 Conservatives, 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Labour)

3.2 SACRE currently has representatives from Christian denominations and other faith groups who represent the principal religions in the area. This includes the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Baha'i traditions. We also have a Humanist observer.

We hope soon to welcome a representative from the Orthodox Church.

There is also a Church of England Group and a group of members from the Teaching Associations.

3.3 The SACRE Budget allocated in 2018/19 was £18,000. SACRE was given a direct budget of £5000 for operational work which was topped up by £2500 contribution from the

Schools, Learning and Effectiveness Service (SLES). The budget funds a Religious Education Consultant and training costs. It has been possible to supplement the budget by charging for training courses and the Annual Conference but this is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to fund. The budget for 2019/2020 has been reduced to a total of £10,000. This represents £7,000 for direct support (adjusting for the expected continued reduction in training income) and £3,000 for infrastructure. We do not envisage any impact to SACRE, as the reductions relate to overhead allocations, with the direct SACRE budget protected.

The consultant writes a termly newsletter which goes to schools and covers national and local issues.

3.4 SACRE also deals with any complaints about RE.

4 Supporting Information

4.1 The National picture for RE

A Commission on Religious Education sponsored by the Religious Education Council issued a report in 2018. This included some useful recommendations about Teacher training and bursaries. It is suggesting reconstituting SACREs as Local Area Networks for Religious Education and Worldviews. The Government has indicated that it does not intend to legislate and change the nature of SACREs.

Due to RE not being part of the EBACC qualifications, the numbers taking GCSE RE have fallen nationally and there is a challenge recruiting specialist RE teachers.

4.2 Religious education in East Sussex and the work of East Sussex SACRE

GCSE results for 2018 show a decline in GCSE take up. See Appendix 1.

The Religious Education Full course take up for East Sussex in 2018 was 32.2%, this is 5.5 percentage points lower than the 2017 take up of 37.7%.

The national take up figure for state funded schools was 37.2%, 5 percentage points higher than East Sussex, however nationally the take up fell by 9.8 percentage points from 47.0% in 2017.

The short course take up for East Sussex was 2.2%, 1.6 percentage points lower than the 2017 figure of 3.8%.

Nationally the short course take up was 3.0%, a fall of 2.9 percentage points from the 2017 take up of 5.9%.

4.3 Training for the last 12 months has been provided through:

- (i) A SACRE Conference for Primary and Secondary RE subject Leaders in March 2018.
- (ii) A primary and secondary network meeting in October with 2 further primary network meetings in November. There were also training courses on 'Being a new Primary Subject leader' in October and on 'Primary assessment' in January 2019.
- (iii) School visits have continued including Broad Oak, Cradle Hill and Denton primaries as well as repeat visits to Causeway and Priory.
- (iv) A complaint was made about provision at a secondary school. Since the initial complaint the school has introduced significant improvements but the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are yet to be met in full. There are also concerns about RE outcomes at a number of other secondary schools
- (v) There are potential curriculum entitlement issues at several Academies. Whilst these are, of course, independent of the LA, and do not have to adhere to the locally agreed syllabus, they still have a statutory duty as recently underlined by the Minister for Schools.

- (vi) Whilst at the last SACRE visit, an academy was meeting the standards, a recent complaint has been made that RE is not being taught after Year 9. We are in contact with the Head Teacher.
- (vii) Inadequacies are acknowledged by staff at two further secondary schools where staff are working with SACRE on improvements.

SACRE is seeking in all cases to solve difficulties by a cooperative partnership approach and through offering a high quality CPD programme which is available for all schools and academies to access.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 SACRE is legally obliged to produce an annual report and it is best practice for this to be considered by the County Council.
- 5.2 The scrutiny Committee is asked to support SACRE in its ongoing work to seek improvements to RE provision.

Councillor Roy Galley

Appendix 1 – GCSE results

Appendix 3 - SACRE Development Plan 2018- 2021

SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018 - 2021

1 Monitor standards and provision of RE in E Sussex schools							
	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	R	A	G
1.1	Develop a simple annual return for schools to include standards, progress, staffing and curriculum information	RE Advisor / Clerk	Annually in October	At least 70% of schools respond to questionnaire			G
1.2	A Report on the number of schools responding to the questionnaire to be brought to SACRE	RE advisor / Clerk	Annually November	At least 70% of schools have responded to the questionnaire	R		
1.3	Review questionnaire returns and Annual GCSE outcomes and workforce data Report to be presented to SACRE to identify schools who have not returned the questionnaire or schools requiring additional support and training Prioritise where visits / support is needed Results to be used to help plan Annual SACRE conference	RE Advisor / SACRE members	Annually for February SACRE	Standards and progress are rising All schools have rigorous self-evaluation for RE in place All academies are meeting requirements of an agreed syllabus. All maintained schools are teaching the agreed syllabus. All academies are meeting requirements. SACRE has a clear understanding of where support and training is required	R		
1.4	Visit all secondary schools over 3 years. Prioritise schools where issues have been highlighted from GCSE results, workforce data and the questionnaire	RE Advisor, SACRE members	Over 3 years	Visits completed to secondary schools. Schools meeting statutory requirements (All academies are meeting requirements of an agreed syllabus) GCSE number rising		A	
1.5	Meet and liaise with Diocesan officers	RE Advisor, Chairman, LA	Annually	A list of primary schools causing		A	

	to identify primary schools who require support and visits.	representative, Diocesan officers	Dec-January	concern compiled			
1.6	Review primary school websites of schools causing concern. Compile a final list of schools to visit	SACRE members, Chairman, Clerk	Dec - February	Improved standards of RE and pupil progress in East Sussex schools All primary schools meeting the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus			G

2 Support for RE in all schools in East Sussex							
	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	R	A	G
2.1	Deliver training for primary schools and governing bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Termly twilight network meetings for RE leads b. Training sessions for school clusters c. Whole school training sessions to be offered d. Review attendance at training courses 	RE Adviser, where necessary national trainers to support different faiths RE Adviser, Chair, LA representative and Clerk	3 twilight meetings a term	100% of schools / RE subject leaders have attended one or more courses. Non-specialist staff with improved subject knowledge Improved attendance for training			G
	e. Training to be offered to governing bodies	Governor services		Governing bodies aware of their statutory responsibilities		A	
2.2	Support Secondary Hubs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nominate replacement secondary hub leader b. Work with Secondary senior leadership to raise profile of 	RE Advisor. Hub leader	3 hub meetings per year	Secondary subject leaders fully briefed on statutory responsibilities and pupil entitlement Improved subject leadership			G

	RE			Ensure statutory provision met in all East Sussex Secondary schools			
2.3	Review CD contents in light of Core report	RE Adviser	Sept 2018			A	
2.4	Support assessment of RE in schools	RE Advisor	Ongoing	All schools have rigorous assessment procedures and self-evaluation in place for RE			G

3	Monitor provision of collective worship and SMSC						
	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	R	A	G
3.1	Monitor provision of collective worship through annual questionnaire and school visits	RE Adviser / SACRE members	Annually	All East Sussex schools meeting statutory requirements for Collective Worship		A	
3.2	Increase training on collective worship and SMSC	RE Adviser	Annually	Improved provision for Collective Worship. Schools understanding the benefits of worship and reflection for their pupils Improved provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British Values		A	

4	Raise profile of RE, Collective Worship and SMSC in East Sussex						
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	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	R	A	G
4.1	Continue termly newsletter for RE teachers, subject leads, Headteachers and SACRE and Governors	RE Advisor / Clerk	Termly	Schools are aware of newsletter and informed of training events as well as local and national issues			G
4.2	Annual conference to be held for primary and secondary schools 0.5 day – 2.00-5.30pm	RE Advisor	Late June / July	Increased attendance Positive feedback from schools Improved subject leadership			R

5 Improve effectiveness of role of SACRE							
	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	R	A	G
5.1	Training and induction for SACRE members	RE Advisor / Clerk	Annually	All SACRE members fully aware of their roles and responsibilities			G
5.2	Improve SACRE members' knowledge and understanding of East Sussex schools	RE Adviser, Chair of SACRE, LA Representative and Clerk	Annually	All SACRE members aware of school performance in RE (positive and negative) Collective Worship and pupils' SMSC			G
5.3	Raise SACRE members' understanding of other faiths/views	RE Adviser, Members of other faith communities Visits to places of worship	Annually	SACRE members better informed about Christianity and other faiths studied in East Sussex schools			G
5.4	Arrange inter-faith event	SACRE members Members of East Sussex Interfaith forum	Annually	Attendance at local interfaith events		A	
5.5	Hold pupil conference	Hub members / RE Adviser	Every 2 years	Secondary students attend conference and improve their knowledge and understanding of the importance of faith in a community		A	
5.6	Increase the profile of SACRE in the community	All SACRE members	Continually	All East Sussex schools and local and wider community		A	
5.7	Succession planning for future RE	RE Adviser / Teachers	Sept 2018 –	Possible new RE adviser with both	R		

	advisor support		July 2019	Primary and Secondary experience			
5.8	Annual report to Scrutiny Committee	RE Adviser / LA Representative, clerk and Chair of SACRE	Annually March	ESCC fully aware of effectiveness and responsibilities of SACRE			G

6 Review RE syllabus							
	Action points	Lead	Timescale	Success criteria	R	A	G
6.1	Review of agreed RE syllabus in light of national developments	RE Advisor	October 2020	Agreed Syllabus or new national document / initiatives in place			G
6.2	Monitor changes at a national level which will impact SACRE a. National changes to be brought to SACRE meetings	RE Adviser / SACRE	Ongoing	SACRE is aware of changes which are made at a national level. SACRE ensure that schools are fully aware of National initiatives SACRE ensures that funding is in place to support schools with any key national initiatives		A	