

The Poole

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Annual report 2015/6

Comments about the SACRE Chair

During the year, Poole SACRE chairman Derek Holloway resigned to take a leading role in education for the Church of England. Derek had chaired Poole SACRE for several years, guiding us through many syllabus reviews as well as being a fount of knowledge and experience which ensured Poole schools were fully able to engage with new developments and raise the bar in teaching challenging RE.

Comments from Acting Chair Angela Muir,

Following Derek Holloway's departure, I have been the acting Chair during the past year. It has been a very interesting journey for Poole SACRE members working collaboratively with Bournemouth SACRE and teachers from both authorities in reviewing the new agreed syllabus. We shared a wide range of views as to what was vital to be included in teaching RE. This has resulted in what we believe will be the best preparation for our children for the world in which we live today.

Comments from new Chair, Lynda Ford-Horne

I have only been chair since June, but it has been a very exciting time as we had the launch of the new syllabus and have been working very closely with the members of the Muslim community to support them with going into schools to deliver workshops on Islam.

Composition of SACRE

Membership

Group A:

Renate Diallo – Quaker

Lynda Forde-Horne – Judaism (Chair)

Rita El-Gazali – Islam

Bharati Joshi – Hindu

Susan Koucheck-Zadeh – Baha'i Faith

Group B:

Rev'd Michael Camp – Church of England (Vice – Chair)

Neil Revell – Church of England

Group C:

Chris Farrow – Secondary School

Hayley Lynam – Primary School

Group D:

Councillor Howell

Councillor Wilkins

Councillor Wilson

Co-opted Members:

Humanist – Sally Hawksworth

Special Schools Representative – Angela Muir

Vacancies

Group A:

Roman Catholic – 1 Representative

Free Churches – 3 Representatives

Sikh – 1 Representative

Buddhist – 1 Representative

Group B

Church of England – 1 Representative

Group C

Teacher Representatives – 3 Representatives (Cheryl Smith waiting to be formally appointed)

The SACRE has some ever-present members and some vacancies. Efforts are being made to establish greater representation particularly in the faith and world view communities. This will be a focus for the coming year.

Introduction

The Autumn Term 2015 marked the start of an important year in the lifespan of the Poole agreed syllabus for Religious Education, the time to initiate a review and decide on the way forward for the next 5 years. The previous syllabus had been popular as it encouraged an enquiry model whilst allowing schools to teach essential a reduced content which allowed a deeper study.

The review coincided with a time of renewed discussion in the academic world about Religious Education, how it is delivered, how content is decided, how it is assessed and indeed the very purpose of it. This is reflected in recent developments in the national RE world, the Church of England leading the way encouraging the teaching of ‘concepts’ and theological literacy through

its 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Although the resource was released after the syllabus review was completed we were mindful of its impending arrival and of the aims behind it.

The Poole SACRE continues to keep in touch with schools and teachers and tailors its yearly plans to meet and support their needs to keep pushing RE learning forward. The SACRE listens to teachers through network meetings, training events and the teacher representatives on the SACRE, and the support it offers is informed by these conversations. The SACRE has continued to appreciate the support of the Borough of Poole, the funding offered enabling support for teachers and schools to continue. The SACRE has met once each term, its membership was well-served by a dedicated Chair and Vice-Chair. Membership of some of the committees has changed and there are some vacancies to fill.

The Poole SACRE continues to be committed to progressing RE across the Borough, believing this subject to have major significance to children and young people's development, both personal and academic. The SACRE has worked hard this year to ensure schools understand its roles and to build strong bridges between itself and the schools it serves on behalf of the Borough.

Agreed Syllabus review

The process of reviewing the joint Poole and Bournemouth RE syllabus took much of the year with regular consultations and meetings. Teachers were consulted through a questionnaire sent to all schools and the termly network meetings. Those who attended the network meetings were consulted directly on the timings of the religions studied and how the previous syllabus had worked practically in their context. The results of this consultation are reflected in the new syllabus.

The process involved collaborations between, teachers, members of faith communities and SACRE members. It was in the most collaborative effort yet for those of us who have been involved in several such reviews and showed a real spirit of co-operation and a desire to provide the best syllabus for children and teachers.

Poole and Bournemouth met separately and together to discuss certain aspects; the consultation process was long and all points raised were considered before the final syllabus was agreed and launched at an event in June.

Agreed Syllabus Launch: Primary RE conference

Friday 17th June 2016 saw the launch of the new joint locally agreed syllabus for Poole and Bournemouth. The launch took the form of a conference event which included an input from Jan Lever, who had lead the review for the SACREs, about the new syllabus, the changes and reasons for the changes from the previous syllabus.

The rest of the day was dedicated to helping teachers present engage with local faith communities and highlighting the core content in the new agreed syllabus. There were inputs from both Poole and Bournemouth SACRE faith and worldview communities concerning Judaism, Islam and Humanism. Each input was well received and led to question and answer sessions.

The conference was well attended and a memory stick containing the new syllabus was distributed to all present on the day. There will be the chance for follow up sessions on the syllabus at forthcoming network meetings.

Teacher network meetings

Termly network meetings have continued again this year – these offer updates on both national and local initiatives and events. In the Autumn term network meeting information and teaching resources were made available to be used for Holocaust Memorial Day in January. In the Spring term resources called ‘Crossing the bridges’ were shared – this is a free resource designed to help develop links with faith communities through visits to places of worship.

Other topics that usually are discussed are assessment, new resources and finding visiting speakers. These meetings also give an opportunity to network and share ideas and success stories as well as raise concerns and seek advice. The meetings are usually well attended but with many RE co-ordinators changing from one year to the next it is difficult to get a real sense of continuity. These meetings, however, are one of the few support systems that are available locally.

Exam results (2015)

Overview and Commentary

At KS4 cohorts of students in all Poole schools were entered for GCSE Religious Studies (full course), through a variety of exam boards.

This is noteworthy and the schools are to be commended for ensuring that students are provided with the opportunity to explore different faiths and beliefs. The subject also develops literacy skills, written and verbal reasoning, as well as critical thinking skills.

71.9% of students attained a grade A* -C, which is roughly in line with the national average (72.2%) and although a little lower than the previous year still indicates a solid performance and recognises the quality of teaching in this subject.

Success in Religious Studies will contribute to the national indicator of 5 GCSEs A*-C (including English and Mathematics) which indicates that students are ready for the next stage of their education.

Ofsted recognise the value of Religious Studies as a major contributor for the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) judgement, which develops a cohesive and respectful school community and prepares young people for adult life.

A small number of students were entered for the short course GCSE in one school but full course is the preferred option for most schools.

At 'A' Level our students outperform national attainment levels in most grades, however of particular note is the success in the higher pass grades.

'A' Level Religious Studies are undertaken at Corfe Hills (11 students) Parkstone Grammar (25), Poole Grammar (16) St Edward's (13) and Poole High school (6).

The Borough of Poole's SACRE would like to congratulate those students and thank the teachers and schools for providing the opportunity for this significant examination success.

David Rees

RE Adviser to Poole