

## **Luton SACRE Annual report for 2012/13**

### **Message from the Chair**

This year has been the first year of the implementation of the new Agreed Syllabus. Many schools have responded positively to the new Agreed Syllabus 'Identities, Meanings and Values' and eighteen schools have taken up support from the RE Consultant through the traded services model.

I would like to thank all the representatives and Local Authority officers involved in supporting SACRE, particularly Sajida Khan, Rosalind Paul and Louise Browne.

Religious Education and its place in our schools has maintained a high profile since last year, despite the continued uncertainty of RE and its future relating to national factors, such as the exclusion of RE from the English Baccalaureate and the increase in the numbers of academies and the introduction of free schools.

Throughout 2012 the Luton SACRE was well represented. There has been some change in representation. We are pleased to welcome new representatives: Lawrence Patterson, Imam Saqib and Jane Lipman. We would like to thank Jane Malcolm and Shiela Marsden, who have now resigned, for their contribution.

Current members include:

#### Group A: Christian and other religious denominations

Stephen O'Brien and Maureen Murphy (Roman Catholic)  
Michael Singleton and Lawrence Patterson (Free Church)  
Marvalyn Chambers and Sylvia Keddo (Black Church)  
A Malik, Imam Saqib and Massood Akhtar (Islam)  
Ramnikbhai T Gohil (Hinduism)  
Kishore Kaler (Sikhism)  
Brian Green (Judaism)

#### Group B: Church of England

Jane Chipperton  
Jane Lipman  
Janet Mackenzie

#### Group C: Teachers

John Williams (headteacher)  
Noshin Hussain (secondary)  
Mrs R Stripe (primary)  
Sue Moss (early years)

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Elif Ucar (further education)  
Angela Wallington (special school)

Group D: Local Authority  
Cllr Mahmood Hussain  
Cllr Gilbert Campbell  
Cllr Andrew Malcolm  
Cllr Tahir Khan

Group E (no voting powers): Co-opted members:  
Ryad Khodabocus (Luton Council of Faiths)  
Trevor Kippax (Luton Borough Council)  
Geoff Collins (Baha'i Faith)

LA Officers  
Sajida Khan (Consultant)  
Rosalind Paul (Clerk to SACRE)  
Louise Browne (Secretary)

Sajida Khan has continued to provide advice and support to schools throughout 2012. She has been developing the Youth SACRE in Luton. She continues to represent SACRE at Luton Council of Faith events and works with different organisations including Luton Churches Education Trust and 3 Faiths Forum to raise the profile of RE.

We have continued to work with our colleagues in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough SACREs and RE Today to ensure that the Agreed Syllabus is supported effectively and implemented this year. A joint meeting was organised in February 2013, where guest speakers Bruce Gill (Chair of National Association of SACREs) and Andrew Copson (Chair of British Humanist Association), spoke about the future of RE.

Schools have introduced new initiatives, for example running RE themed days/weeks to raise the profile of RE. These efforts are commendable and we should continue to offer support to such projects. Hillborough Junior held their annual 'Diversity Day,' Wigmore Primary held their first ever RE themed day on 'Heroes,' which explored special leaders from different faiths. Bushmead Primary celebrated 'Bushmead in Harmony.' Someries Junior organised an RE themed week, which encouraged students to become 'Interfaith Explorers.' Well done to all of these schools for their contribution to raising the profile of RE in Luton.

John Williams  
Chair, Luton SACRE

## **Summary of the key activities of Luton SACRE**

Three full SACRE meetings were held during the period covered by this report. The minutes of meetings can be found on the new SACRE website: [http://www.luton.gov.uk/Education\\_and\\_learning/sacre](http://www.luton.gov.uk/Education_and_learning/sacre)

### **The new Agreed Syllabus ‘Identities, Meanings and Values’**

The feedback so far has been extremely positive, teachers have commented that the new Agreed Syllabus has made RE more exciting.

### **The SACRE RETool: Reporting and evaluating Toolkit**

SACRE’s progress was evaluated, using the Ofsted publication, ‘SACREs and self-evaluation: a guide,’ this sets out the key areas of a SACRE’s work and exemplification of good practice.

The RETool focuses on the following five aspects of the work of a SACRE and provides exemplification of good practice:

- Promoting improvement in the standards, the quality of teaching and provision in RE
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the Locally Agreed Syllabus
- Promoting improvement in the provision and quality of collective worship
- Managing the SACRE and building the partnership between the SACRE, the local authority and other key stakeholders
- Contributing to cohesion across the community and the promotion of social and racial harmony

Each aspect forms a separate section within the RETool and each section divided into focus questions to help SACREs explore their provision. Descriptors for “Developing”, “Established” and “Advanced” practice enable each SACRE to evaluate their standing within each focus question. This helps a SACRE identify key priorities for the new development plan.

In November 2012, the RE Consultant and members of SACRE conducted an initial assessment of four key areas within the toolkit. In summary we considered our SACRE to be “Developing” in four of the categories, “Established” in eight of the categories and “Advanced” in seven of the categories. A number of opportunities were identified to improve on those assessments to work towards an “Advanced” SACRE. The SACRE will be asked to consider other sections of the toolkit at subsequent meetings.

### **2012 Religious Studies GSCE results**

In 2012 48% of students gained an A\* to C grade for short course RE. There were 647 entries from 8 high schools. This is the same percentage as 2011 but there were 276 fewer entrants in 2012 than in 2011.

For the GSCE Full course 70% of 1129 entrants from 12 High schools gained A\* to C grades. The percentage gaining between A\* to C grades fell by 8 % compared to last year's results and was 4% lower than the national average. However the number of entries for GCSE full course increased by 359. All of the high schools have retained their GCSE RE courses.

### **Support and training for Luton teachers.**

Luton continues to offer a support programme for teachers of RE. This includes: consultancy and support, courses and network meetings for teachers of RE. Details of professional development opportunities for teachers of RE can be found at: [www.schoolsupport.luton.gov.uk](http://www.schoolsupport.luton.gov.uk).

From April 2013 there will be no separate Service Level Agreement for RE. However Sajida Khan can provide bespoke training for individuals, departments, whole staff or clusters of schools upon request. Primary sessions have focused on developing teacher understanding of effective strategies and good learning. Secondary sessions have focused on raising levels of attainment and engaging students more in RE lessons.

Fifteen primary schools attended the Primary Teacher Network Groups over the year. There were fewer schools represented at the secondary meetings.

Recent training sessions on: 'Effective and Engaging Teaching and Learning,' 'Assessment for Learning in RE' and 'Teaching Three Religions' were also offered by RE Today in collaboration with the three local authorities. These were well attended, although only five teachers were from Luton.

### **Conferences and training**

#### **National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) conference 2012**

Guest speakers included Professor Jackson who spent some time talking about the findings of the REDCo project (Research on Religion and Education in Europe – Religion, Education, Dialogue, Conflict). These were studies of young people from eight countries and their views on religion in schools. It revealed that students between the ages of 14 and 16 see the classroom as a 'safe space' for dialogue, they want more of a voice and aspire to peaceful coexistence based on knowledge about each other's religions and worldviews. This research found that RE develops positive

attitudes towards other people as well as self-reflection and personal growth including students' development as members of religious traditions. The young people appreciated direct contact with different groups in their learning.

The second speaker, Lat Blaylock spoke about 'SACRE + Teachers of RE = Good Learning.' He spoke about a project on learning events, which has been a good way to reach teachers who have been unable or never manage to get out of school for professional development. Schools would be encouraged to bring their most able pupils to a conference and the accompanying teachers would be able to take good ideas back to their schools. He spoke about some of the activities used with students at these events. Lat said that there is a need for SACREs to work in partnership with schools on initiatives like this. All the conferences have been the result of SACRE engagement; this is a positive contribution that they can make to raising the profile of RE.

Lat shared examples of 'good RE.' His examples are available on the NASACRE website. He focused on using reflective questions which engaged the pupils. Lat maintained that good support from SACREs for teachers would improve RE and claimed that projects of SACREs matter. "Great SACREs are critical friends to teachers."

### **AREIAC Conference**

The Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) Conference in November 2012 focused on discussion about 'enquiry based learning' and RE.

### **National and Local initiatives**

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Religious Education was set up last year to focus on safeguarding the provision of RE in our schools and explore how the subject can continue to deliver a valuable dimension to the education of all children and young people. Their recently published report, 'RE: The Truth Unmasked,' highlighted a number of concerns relating to:

- The lack of training and professional development opportunities for RE teachers
- Lack of confidence in teaching RE
- The number of non-specialists and unqualified teachers teaching RE

Local authorities were asked to ensure sufficient resources are made available to enable SACREs to:

- Provide high quality RE support
- Monitor the quality of the provision and staffing of RE
- Develop networks to share good practice in RE

There are clear implications of this report for SACRE to consider, these will be looked at a future meeting.

Religious Education has to be taught according to their local Agreed Syllabus and that Religious Education is a statutory subject. All KS4 students must follow an accredited course as is required in the Agreed Syllabus. Academies in Luton were invited to use the local Agreed Syllabus to ensure that they fulfill their statutory requirements. Letters and guidance about this were sent out to all Academies and Free schools in Luton. Senior Leaders and Governing Bodies are urged to ensure that RE Subject Leaders/RE Coordinators are adequately supported in terms of:

- Professional development, opportunities to monitor and evaluate the subject
- Opportunities to train and support colleagues
- Ensuring an adequate budget in order to help raise standards in Religious Education

Luton SACRE continued its membership with the National Association of SACREs and circulates newsletters and annual reports to members of SACRE. The RE Consultant is a member of AREIAC (Association for RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants). The Consultant maintains links with Luton Council of Faiths (LCOF) and Luton Churches Educational Trust (LCET) and is developing partnerships with different faith groups. LCOF and LCET were represented by their co-opted members, who regularly shared the latest projects and events being organised.

In September the RE Consultant and SACRE members took part in the Annual Peace Walk organised by Luton Council of Faiths. In January, the RE Consultant and SACRE members attended the Holocaust Memorial Day event for the public commemoration of the Holocaust alongside a remembrance of all victims of genocide, racism and persecution across the world.

### **Youth SACRE**

Young people can play a key part in developing the work of Luton SACRE. High Schools were invited to participate in this work. This project has had excellent feedback from those who attended. This project has involved 70 different students from 8 out of 12 Luton high schools. Students met over three terms to discuss important moral and ethical issues and to explore and encounter different faiths and beliefs.

The group experienced workshops delivered by the 3 Faiths Forum, 'The Art of Asking' and 'Encountering Beliefs.' Luton schools were invited to enter students into a competition to design a logo for the group. There were

over 130 entries. Schools were encouraged and supported to participate in the national initiative for young RE ambassadors. The scheme gives students aged 11 - 18 opportunities to:

- Share their enthusiasm and interest for RE and gain leadership experience
- Give their perspective to adults who work to support RE at the highest levels, such as the RE Council and MPs in parliament
- Develop skills in communicating successfully to a wide range of audiences
- Build up relevant experience for college, UCAS or job applications
- Meet and debate with other young people about why RE matters.