

# London Borough of Waltham Forest

## SACRE

(Standing Advisory Council on  
Religious Education)



## Annual Report 2011 - 2012



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Waltham Forest SACRE is a member of the National Association of SACREs



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### Waltham Forest SACRE Meeting Dates

- 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011 at Walthamstow Academy
- 28<sup>th</sup> November 2011 Walthamstow Academy
- 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012 at Walthamstow Academy
- 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012 at Walthamstow Academy
- 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012 at Walthamstow Academy

The SACRE's main meeting place this year has been The Academy, Walthamstow. During this time there have also been many Executive meetings between the Chair, Vice Chair, LA and the RE Adviser. Due to the end of the outsourcing to Babcocks plc, therefore changes in clerks and LA link, there have been dislocations to the SACRE's work plan.

## Overview & introduction from the Chair of SACRE

This has been a very interesting and busy sixteen months for us all with a number of major changes within our Local Authority, work continuing with SACRE work streams and affiliations and issues which have provided much challenge to Waltham Forest as a whole.

One delightful piece of news for WF SACRE is that one of our long standing members, Cllr Richard Sweden, became Mayor of our Borough for this municipal year. I also have to note that Rafi Salasnik, Jenny Richmond, Moganie Moodley and Francis Brett have left our SACRE and I just want in passing to record my thanks to them all for their contributions to our Agreed Syllabus and the other projects with which we have been involved. Oh and also thanks to Sandra Teacher and Sarah Younger from the Board of Deputies for their short involvement and encouragement to us all.

For me this has been a busy year as I watched my grandson grow into a little boy passing through his terrible two's stage and the terrible pressures put on my daughter as she decided if she is going to be able to carry on her career or does she want another baby; my eldest son became a "Head Chef" my younger son is now a qualified and bonded croupier and I have been getting slower and slower as both of my hips degenerate. I await the go ahead from the orthopaedic surgeons as to when they'll do replacements but in the end it's not going to stop me from being as active and as purposeful as I can.

The last year nationally has seen many challenges and neglects of RE as a subject in schools, in particular the failure to include it in the English Ebacc and the general neglect it seems to have engendered from our Secretary of State. However it is good to see the RE world endeavouring to fight its corner and I am delighted that there is more cohesion in the RE Education World particularly working with cross-party elected members of parliament to promote this vital aspect of education in promoting and fostering strong, healthy and harmonious multicultural and multi faith communities.

For The Waltham Forest community as one of The Five Olympic Boroughs we saw, and many of us experienced first-hand the wonders of the London Olympics and then the Paralympic Games which generally became known as '2012'. Not only was the whole Olympic Park ready on time but many of us had the opportunity to visit and attend preliminary events before the grand opening not least of which was the rehearsal for the "Opening Ceremony" which I was able to attend. There followed a month of the most wonderful community spirit and expectation throughout the events that transpired. Incredibly I was able to get nearly all my quota of tickets for the Paralympics and was proud to see Team GB win gold in both the pool and on the track. I was standing there shouting at the top of my voice as Peacock beat Pretorius in the hundred metres on the Thursday evening and then on the Saturday as Pretorius won the four hundred metres. There was nothing quite like standing for our National Anthem although the crowds were always respectful of other nationalities and it is personally for me a disappointment that in my view at least one country's managers tried to blame their lack of success on the spectators when in fact we cheered wildly for all the winners, clapped and admired all the other fantastic athletes who had put their hearts and souls into the events, whatever their nationality or impairment.

Regrettably to counterpoise this, at around the same time we received the news that one of the far right groups wanted to come and march in our borough. This was particularly abhorrent to many of us because they wanted to demonstrate against many of the achievements of our strong local community in living and sharing with each other highlighting some of the extremisms that unfortunately occur, wanting to create disharmony where there is none. I am delighted that the Borough lived up to its motto taken from the thoughts and writings of William Morris - "Fellowship is life and the lack of fellowship death" and demonstrated that we had life. Following a number of meetings the first march was postponed; it finally took place one Saturday afternoon in September and really went nowhere. This was followed by a few weeks later the notification that horror of horrors they wanted to come back. Petitions followed and then one damp autumn afternoon along with the Leader of the Council we set off in a red Routemaster Bus to Parliament Square to present the petitions to the Home Office. At last support came and following further events the march was banned -but this doesn't mean they won't be back this time next year. I just hope and pray that Walthamstow will not go down in the same annals with Tooley Street.

It was decided by the Council in 2011 that SACRE would return from the outsource contract and would again become in house and this transpired in March 2012. So from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 our SACRE was once again supported through the LA rather than our outsource contractors who had by this time become Babcock 4S Waltham Forest. As a result nearly all of the staff with who we had been working just disappeared. However I was personally delighted when I learnt that our new LA contact was to be Amanda Doaud and she took over immediately until unfortunately for us she gained a new post working for a school. Rachael Garner then took over until September when our LA contact became Eve McCloughlin to whom I am most indebted for her work on our behalf. I should also like to make a special mention of Zuhra Kayani who took over as the SACRE Clerk in April 2012, combining her duties with that of being the PA to our Head of School Improvement and only working four days a week – Zuhra was brilliant and really interested in what she did with us. Being a parent of small children in the borough added to her personal interest in what we were doing. However as in the autumn she decided that she really wanted to spend more time with her children and so left to take a post which only required her to work three days a week. We have then been fortunate to have Ella Coulson take over Zuhra's post working as our Clerk and I'm really pleased to welcome her in this report.

I guess therefore it is time for me to express our thanks to the people who worked closely with us but who no longer do. Ivan Stevenson at Babcock 4S Surrey, Patricia Edwards, Sarah Thistle and Kathryn Ryan at Babcock 4S Waltham Forest. I have also recently learnt that Ivan has left his post with B4S Surrey and is trying a new career at 30,000 feet!

I want here to mention one of the few annoyances of being SACRE chair and that's the almost monotonous regularity that at both Christmas and Easter times we seem along with all the other local LA's to get Freedom of Information Requests from one particular stable of our National Press. These generally try to elicit information that either does not exist or is anti-theistic in some way and I'm really fed up with them. They really are a waste of a lot of people's time and whilst I respect everyone's right to know what is going on, these FOI's are becoming provocative.

One of the great pleasures of my role is working with schools and I have enjoyed this immensely along with the work I have been involved with for our Faith Community Forum – probably more about this next year. SACRE has lots of work to do over the next year and this time next year I hope to be able to report on the publication of our most recent and most useful Agreed Syllabus.

Finally can I pay tribute to all the SACRE members who come out to our at least six meetings a year, many held on cold and inhospitable winter nights, it's a great pleasure meeting and working with them all. I'd also like to pay particular thanks to our support, particularly our new LA link and our SACRE Clerks, the advisors we have, particularly Denise Chaplin and finally but not least to Peter Dawe our vice chair for his involvement, support and encouragement.

Looking forward to next year, it's going to be no less a challenge but one we all yet again relish, because good RE contributes to good communities living alongside and with each other.

Kind Regards

Ted Cooke  
Chair, Waltham Forest SACRE



## **2 Religious Education (RE)**

### **2.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus**

During this year work to revise the Primary Agreed Syllabus continued, being led by Ivan Stephenson from Babcock4S, Surrey until the end of March when the incomplete work was handed back to the SACRE at the end of the Babcock's contract. The RER Adviser to SACRE, Denise Chaplin, has started to work on consolidating the revisions and working with SACRE faith members to continue to scope out the work.

## 2.2 Standards in RE

### 2.2.1 Monitoring

One of the SACRE's main roles is to monitor the quality of RE in Waltham Forest schools and the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus. SACRE remain concerned that Ofsted inspection reports no longer give them information on RE that enables them to monitor standards and advise the LA in an informed way.

Over the past 3 years members of the SACRE discussed with the outsource providers how they could be creative in developing alternative effective ways of acquiring the knowledge they require. It was agreed the LA and SACRE needed to address this issue with some urgency. However the partner meetings with subject leaders finished during the year. This matter will need to be discussed with the new Waltham Forest Education providers during the next year.

### 2.2.2 GCSE Examination Results

Nationally and full course religious studies GCSE entries have increased. Nationally short course entries have decreased between 2011 and 2012 but as can be seen from the table below the local cohort for the short course has risen dramatically.

#### **National entries compared with local entries 2010-2012**

	2010		2011		2012	
	National	Waltham Forest	National	Waltham Forest	National	Waltham Forest
<b>Full</b>	170,767	526	199,752	572	216,373	607
<b>Short</b>	254,698	999	233,998	868	211,269	1020

Following the short course GCSE is the minimum entitlement set out in the non-statutory National Framework for RE for the programme of study at Key Stage 4. Along with the majority of Agreed Syllabuses in England, Waltham Forest have specified that students should be taught an examination course as their requirement for meeting the statutory provision for RE. Decisions about which students to enter for an examination are of course matters for individual schools.

The introduction of the GCSE Short Course in 1996 was very popular with schools who were then able to give students formal accreditation for their statutory provision for RE. They are an important vehicle for ensuring that all students study RE at this pivotal period in their development and therefore leave school with a reasonable degree of religious knowledge, understanding and literacy.

Numbers of entries for short courses increased steadily to a peak in 2009 but since this time they have fallen in all subjects. The reform of 14-16 Performance Tables in England from 2014 means that short course GCSEs will no longer count towards the average point score of a school although the award will still contribute to a student's individual performance. The effect of this decision on Religious Education/Studies is not yet clear but may lead to a devaluation of the short course and fewer entries as a consequence

(which we may be detecting this year). However, according to the Joint Council for Qualifications, entries for Religious Studies in 2012 made up over 60% of entries for short courses in total, so changes to the status of the short course would be expected to impact on Religious Studies more significantly than on any other subject.

The national rise in full course Religious Studies may be accounted for in part by some schools switching to the full course for all students instead of the short course. Whereas the number of students studying History and Geography has increased this year, the numbers studying RS at GCSE level fell for the first time. This drop in entries is not consistent across the UK. Full course entries have risen by 8% in England and 7% in Wales. Short Course entries have fallen by 10% in England but increased by 5% in Wales.