

Westhill/NASACRE Awards 2012-13
Education into Diversity: Report on the ‘Distinctively Local’ SACRE Project
North Somerset and Somerset SACREs, working with the SACREs of Bath & North East
Somerset, Bristol, Haringey and the Isles of Scilly

Aims

The main aim of the ‘Distinctively Local’ project was to engage academies, community and free schools within the local authorities sharing an agreed syllabus in producing resources for RE that mark out distinctively local elements of religion and belief in each authority.

Project team members

Teachers and advisers representing a cross-section of types of school, age-ranges and local authorities were recruited for the project: Dave Francis (Associate Adviser to Somerset & North Somerset SACREs), Yvonne Rayner (Berkley CofE VC First School), Frances Thomson (Crispin Academy School), Lyn Girling and Sally Smiles (Critchill Special School), Claire Selway (Holyrood Academy School), David McGrath (Oakfield Academy Middle School), Jenni Howell (Selwood Anglican/Methodist Academy Middle School), Ruth Motion and Amy Maunder (The Taunton CofE Academy), Rachel Cooper (Trinity CofE VC Primary School), Katie Duncan (Frome Community College), Katy Staples (Adviser to Bristol SACRE), Anita Compton (Adviser to Haringey SACRE), and Bob Allaway (Haringey SACRE member).

During the time of the project Michael Metcalf (NASACRE) and Peter Newman (Equalities Champion for Somerset CC) were able to attend one meeting of the project group and were kept in touch with developments as the project progressed.

Achievements of the Project

The aim of the ‘Distinctively Local’ project was to engage schools within the six local authorities sharing the agreed syllabus ‘*Awareness, Mystery and Value*’ (AMV) in producing resources for religious education that mark out distinctively local elements of religion and belief in each authority.

At the time of writing the project resulted in the following achievements:

- two model templates – one featuring Somerset and one featuring Haringey – have been uploaded to the AMV agreed syllabus website. These provide guidance for schools on how to find suitable local resources and how to incorporate their use in the agreed syllabus programme of study;
- four examples of ‘mini-schemes of learning’, covering key stages 1, 2 and 3, uploaded to the AMV agreed syllabus website, showing how different sorts of local resource can be used to produce compelling learning within RE lessons;
- three further schemes being trialled in the project teachers’ schools, with the expectation of adding them to the website in due course.

The exemplar templates and schemes of learning can be found at:

<http://amv.somerset.gov.uk/local/>

Broader Outcomes

1. Promotion of education into diversity among young people

The exemplar templates and planning uploaded to the AMV site was successful in pointing to the variety of Christian groups located in the 'AMV' regions, as well as to the influence and contribution to the life of local communities made by individuals and groups from a variety of religion and belief traditions. They were all designed to promote understanding between people from these different groups. For example, in the KS3 unit on what can be learnt from the religions, beliefs and communities in the local area today, there is a focus on individuals who may have 'protected characteristics' that are illegal to discriminate against, in order to challenge prejudices and introduce pupils to the positive benefits of religious and cultural diversity in the area.

2. Benefits for communities in the AMV regions

The project has brought recognition and renewed contact for some communities with the work of SACRE. For example, in the KS2 unit on how people might be inspired by the example of John Wesley, pupils are encouraged to make contact with or visit sites of interest to Methodists such as the New Room in Bristol. Or again, in one of the KS1 units on why some places are special, pupils are encouraged to make contact with and visit local places of worship, in this case, those that are in use by Christian communities.

In providing the guides to local resources in such diverse areas as Somerset and the London Borough of Haringey, the project has enabled teachers to make connections between more rural areas of the AMV region with more urban and multi-religious ones.

3. Production of exemplar planning schemes

These have been designed to promote pupils':

- interest in powerful features of religion and belief in the local area. For example, in one of the KS1 units on why some places are special, pupils are introduced to the tradition of well-dressing as a powerful way of engaging with Christian history, beliefs and forms of expression, alongside questions of identity and belonging;
- knowledge and understanding of the diversity of religion and belief even in an apparently 'mono-cultural' setting. For example in the KS3 unit, challenging stereotypes about different groups found in the local community;
- understanding of people from different groups. For example, in the guide to resources in Haringey, pupils are encouraged to explore the impact local Christians are having in their work with people in the area;
- contact and confidence with local religion and belief communities. For example, in the guide to resources in Somerset, pupils are encouraged to investigate the work of humanist celebrants as well as hospital and prison chaplains, and to make visits to local places of worship or museums and libraries that hold exhibitions related to the religious and cultural life of the county.

Overall, the project has been successful in engaging teachers from different school settings in an investigation of matters of religion and belief relating to our agreed syllabus that are 'distinctively local'. This has enabled them to unearth some hidden gems that help to connect inspirational people of the past and present to the lives of the children living in those same places today. In addition, the project provided an excellent opportunity for different local authority SACREs to co-operate on an educational project with very positive outcomes for all those who participated, and ultimately for the children in RE classrooms.

Dave Francis, Associate Adviser for Religious Education
20 January 2014