

# Worcestershire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

## Draft SACRE Annual Report for the Academic

### Year 2016/17

#### 1 Worcestershire SACRE Annual Report 2016-2017

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is a statutory body set up to advise the Local Authority on matters related to religious education and collective worship. Its members are drawn from teachers, Local Authority representatives including Councillors, faith representatives from the Church of England and a range of Christian denominations, and representatives from other religious groups represented in the region.

SACRE's key functions include monitoring the provision and quality of RE, and providing advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the agreed syllabus. This includes advice on methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and provision of teacher training. This is primarily done through the review and implementation of the locally agreed syllabus, a process which is required every five years. This is followed by on-going monitoring of its effectiveness in the light of changing national education policy.

The Learning and Achievement functions of Worcestershire County Council were commissioned out to Babcock International for 2016-2017. SACRE is grateful to Worcestershire County Council for its continuing support, via Babcock International, and in particular for agreeing a three-year funding arrangement, which has enabled us to create a Development Plan for these three years. Limits to funding inevitably limit the scope of SACRE's activities. SACRE endeavours to offer maximum support to schools through its use of conferences and network meetings, and this year has enabled the setting up of the Hub Leaders' project.

Worcestershire SACRE met three times in 2016-2017: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The minutes of these meetings are available on the County Council Website. Membership is kept under review each year. In 2016-2017, membership was as follows:

Committee A: Christian denominations and other religions	Mrs L Thorne (Ba'hai - Chairman) Mr G Bounds (Free Church Representative) Mrs T Khawaja (Muslim) Mrs C Parker (Methodist) Dr Y Stollard (Jewish)
Committee B: Church of England	Ms S Boulter Mrs T Lister Ms K Poole
Committee C: Teachers	Ms C Betteridge Mr C Giles
Committee D: Local Authority elected representatives	Mrs S Askin (until May 2017) Mr I Hopwood (Vice-Chairman) (until May 2017) Mr R C Lunn Mr M Jenkins (from May 2017)
Co-opted	Ms E Hill (University of Worcester) Ms A Hooper (Humanist Representative)

## 2 Supporting RE in Worcestershire

The key activities of SACRE over the period 2016-17 have focused on maintaining support for teachers as they implement the revised agreed syllabus for RE. SACRE representative, Tracy Lister from Whittington School has been working on developing a guide for visits and visitors for schools, including contact names and details. This will be distributed at the conferences in summer 2018.

Worcestershire and Herefordshire SACREs now share the same agreed syllabus, so training that is available for either county has been made available to neighbouring schools.

## 3 SACRE Primary RE Conferences 2017

Herefordshire and Worcestershire share the same agreed syllabus, and so two conferences were offered this summer. They were held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June (Pear Tree Inn, Worcester) and Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June (Whitecross School, Hereford). The conferences had the same programme and they were both offered to teachers in both counties. 24 teachers attended the Worcester conference, on an exceptionally hot summer day, and 21 teachers attended the Hereford conference.

The programme was on the theme of 'Thoughtful RE: preparing pupils for life'. It was led by Julia Diamond-Conway and Stephen Pett from RE Today, with sessions on living religion and belief, ideas for RE with 4-7s, and flexible strategies for using the visual and performing arts to deepen pupils' understanding. Razwan Ul-Haq, a Muslim artist and educator, joined the day to explore how to handle difficult issues in RE, in particular with regard to Islamophobia. Teachers also took part in a 'speed dating' activity to share classroom ideas.

Comments from head teachers and teachers attending included the following representative sample:

- *Very good conference with lots of useful ideas and resources to take back to school.*
- *Fantastic opportunity to share ideas in a friendly and informative way. Teaching strategies suggested (e.g lesson starters, everyone/no one believes, can be adapted for all age groups). Great to share experiences of places of worship/visitors.*
- *I would have been interested to attend both workshops, as they were both valuable, rather than sharing ideas with other teachers. It was very useful to hear ideas about using thinking skills in RE in practical ways.*
- *Great resources; great to have perspective from Razwan; thank you for all links etc. Easy listening, great connections.*

It was welcome that the Worcestershire conference was able to go ahead, despite lower take-up from schools than in previous years. SACRE will be looking at ways of encouraging participation in 2018.

## 4 Secondary RE Conference: June 2017

In 2016, numbers for the joint Worcestershire/Herefordshire secondary conference were very low, in part because an additional day conference had been arranged in the Spring term by South Bromsgrove High School, Worcestershire. SACRE agreed that for 2017 it would be better to join the two conferences, to maximise numbers and impact through support and cooperation rather than competition.

As a result of this decision, a joint conference was held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017, partnering with Herefordshire SACRE, South Bromsgrove Teaching School Alliance, Wigmore Teaching School Alliance (Hereteach), RE Today and the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE). Over 80 teachers attended, with a focus on subject knowledge for GCSE. Faith representatives from the six major world faith traditions were present, with keynote addresses from Kate Christopher and Stephen Pett (RE Today). 90% of delegates rated the event as 'excellent'.

## 5. Support for special school RE

A day for RE in special schools was held in October 2016. Anne Krisman, Head of RE at Little Heath Special School, Redbridge, and senior Tibetan Buddhist nun, Tsuiltrim Tenzin Choesang, led the day, including sessions on planning, teaching Islam, British Values and SMSC, and using singing bowls in reflective practice. Comments from the 17 delegates included:

- *A well-balanced and focused course*
- *Everyone REALLY friendly. Lovely to have a specific SEN day*
- *Lots of examples given but less about strategies and ideas to take away. Good to network and meet people in other special schools.*
- *A really nice relaxed day, which provided time to chat with other schools about different strategies/practices used. The different sessions have given me confidence in my planning, resourcing and a next step plan.*
- *Sharing ideas with other teachers was beneficial*
- *It has been useful to talk to other teachers who lead RE – swap ideas etc. It’s given me the confidence that what I have planned and developed is ok!*

Actions teachers intended to pursue in response included:

- *Dissemination of info gained from planning RE. Exploration of use of singing bowls within the school*
- *More individual-based teaching; focus on key points/themes; use of RE days and RE weeks*
- *Looking at how to fit 5 Keys approach into the school curriculum; encourage staff to address RE in explicit way*
- *Getting to the core; being more creative/experiential*
- *Network with other schools; add to resources; buy singing bowls!*
- *Network with people from the course. Send a staff survey around to gauge current understanding; plan for multimedia sessions*

A further follow-up day is planned in 2018.

## **6 Excellent RE Hub leaders project**

SACRE has been planning to find sustainable ways of supporting local teachers, through the use of local hub groups. We have sought funding to train a group of excellent primary RE practitioners in order to set up local school-based network groups in different regions of the county. This will be a partnership between SACRE, the Diocese of Worcester, RE Today, National Association of Teachers of RE, and Culham St Gabriel’s Trust. We are grateful to Culham St Gabriel’s for matching SACRE funding, as part of their support for the ‘Excellent RE Project’ run by RE Today.

A number of excellent RE subject leaders have been identified from their involvement in network meetings in the past, also in consultation with the Diocese, Worcestershire University ITE lecturers and LA School Improvement Partners. Schools have been invited to join, with a regional spread across the county. Funding enables schools to receive training for 3.5 days, led by Stephen Pett (RE Today) and Ellie Hill (University of Worcestershire), to develop their RE leadership and practice. Teachers then use what they have learnt to set up and run a local group, affiliating it to NATRE and sustaining this group beyond the training period. Schools receive supply costs for their teachers on the project, and the project will be written up as a research project.

## **7 Commentary on exam results summer 2017**

[To follow]

## **8 Quality of teaching in Worcestershire.**

SACRE has received reports on quality of teaching in Church schools through an analysis of current SIAMS reports. Additional ways of monitoring will be considered by SACRE in 2017-2018 as part of the monitoring of the impact of the revised agreed syllabus. A survey is planned as one method of monitoring.

## **9 Future support for RE**

On-going support for teachers, developing their ability to plan, using the new agreed syllabus planning steps, and for improving teaching and learning in RE, is planned for 2017-2018, including:

- A day for teachers in local Special Schools is planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018 at the new Buddhist retreat centre near Ledbury, Herefordshire.
- Annual SACRE conference for primary teachers, focusing on ideas for teaching and learning, based on the new syllabus, including planning, assessment and deeper learning in four religions, in partnership with Worcestershire SACRE.
- Annual SACRE secondary conference, in partnership with Herefordshire SACRE, Gloucestershire SACRE, Hereteach (Wigmore TSA), South Bromsgrove High School TSA, RE Today and NATRE, focusing on supporting teachers in deepening their understanding of Christianity and Islam, as part of the challenge of teaching the new GCSE specifications, as well as ways of developing assessment and planning for progress.
- School Survey to assess impact and value of revised agreed syllabus.

## **9 Other matters:**

SACRE considered several pertinent issues over the year, including:

- 'The geography of anti-Muslim hatred in 2015', a paper presented by Ms T Khawaja; discussion included concern about the needs of refugees in Worcestershire schools.
- GCSE and A level results
- NASACRE survey of SACREs
- Commission on RE
- Local events

Lindsay Thorne  
Chair of SACRE  
May 2018