

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th November 2018
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities

Matters Arising

Briefing note to Staffordshire Council's SACRE members from Bob Spencer

Codsall High School

Following the recent SACRE meeting I was asked if I would include in my pre-arranged discussions with the head of CHS the fact that they appear to be failing students with regard to their RS education. Members will recall a recent survey of all secondary RS provision in the county had raised serious concerns about whether pupils at CHS were receiving their entitlement to RE at KS4. Also, concerns were expressed about the dropping of the GCSE RE course at CHS in spite of a substantial and enthusiastic group who had chosen this option (12 students had expressed a wish to study RS but the school adopted an arbitrary limit of 15).

I met with the head on Friday 29th June 2018. He is a relatively new headteacher and is clearly committed to achieving the best for all his pupils. He was aware of the issue and expressed genuine disappointment that he was unable to provide this opportunity for students. He pointed out a similar problem with engineering studies. It is simply a matter of managing budgets. He has the teachers but there comes a point when, despite their best efforts, below a certain number it is simply unaffordable. He had looked at alternative provision, offering after school sessions but numbers dropped further and their responsibilities around transport proved problematic. He assured me he would continue to monitor the situation and would be keen to include RS if student numbers increased. Interestingly, he pointed to a potential problem with the tiered schooling system in Staffordshire. Having previously been the head of a school in Walsall he suggested pupils there would have had significantly longer to study RS before they made their option choices, whereas in Staffordshire he feels the first and middle schools do not provide sufficient early provision. When pupils progress to senior school they don't have the experience to make informed decisions. He again outlined this issue is not unique to RS and was an issue he is currently discussing within his federation of schools.

He offered to keep me updated as the discussions progress and asked if the SACRE panel had any suggestions.

I personally feel this is an unacceptable position if pupils express a desire to study but schools are under extreme pressure to manage their finances. I look forward to discussing the issues at the next meeting.

Bob Spencer

County and District Councillor for Codsall