

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**  
**19<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

**Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and  
Communities**

**An Update on Key Issues**

**1 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To present members of SACRE with a brief update on key issues that have developed or arisen since the last meeting of SACRE.

**2 Summary**

2.1 Members of SACRE will receive a brief report on a number of key issues. These are matters which have either been raised at previous SACRE meetings and which have moved forward or matters on which it is appropriate to brief members of SACRE.

**3 Recommendation**

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the report and note the contents

**4 Background**

4.1 Since the Spring term meeting of the SACRE there have been developments in a number of areas which had previously been agenda items for SACRE or which have local or national importance for RE.

4.2 Members will be briefed on these key developments.

**5 Equal Opportunities**

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

**6 Financial implications**

6.1 Financial implications may be raised by individual items. These have been dealt with elsewhere or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

**Contact Officer**

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## **Key Issues**

### **Westhill Legacy project- Explore, Engage, Reflect in conjunction with Youth Net**

This project has continued with the support of SACRE, see report on Agenda item 9.

### **Continuous Professional Development**

Schools have been offered the opportunity to attend RE networking afternoons in the forthcoming Autumn 2019 and Spring 2020 terms, these networking afternoons are advertised in the training calendar.

Eleven schools have already taken up the opportunity to share good practice through these networking afternoons especially with regard to assessment and updated information.

Mary Gale has been commissioned to facilitate this CPD.

### **Supporting Governors in understanding their Statutory requirements for RE**

All governors that buy into the Governor Services, Service Level Agreement have received an additional written summary and electronic update facilitated by Mary Gale on their statutory duties. This term reminders about statutory duties have been reiterated.

Over 170 governors and a number of school and agency clerks have accessed the face to face training and many more have access to the Governor Information Pack. (GIP)

This pack with some modifications has also been launched as a National Governor Information Pack, through a project funded by the DfE called Governor Space.

### **NASACRE Conference and ARIEAC update**

Mary Gale attended the NASCARE annual conference in Manchester on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, with the Chair of Staffordshire SACRE- Michael Metcalf. See separate agenda item 6.

Mary Gale will be attending a meeting in Birmingham on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, so there will be an oral update at the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

### **Spreading the word about the work of SACRE**

Mary Gale was invited to attend a JAC- Joint Action committee meeting in Stafford on 4<sup>th</sup> June to update them on the work of SACRE and the situation regarding the teaching of RE and the state of CW in Staffordshire and in the nation in general.

Mary received the following email after the meeting:-

*Thanks so much for a very valued input at our meeting yesterday. Your enthusiasm shines through as it always did! Personally, I really wish schools would make the most of singing and music as a valued part of collective worship. So glad two of the grandchildren are at a church school where this happens. **Gill Hampton***

## **NATRE Strictly RE conference- Heathrow London**

Mary attended the NATRE conference on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019. She took part in a number of workshops including updates on latest creative curriculum resources to deliver quality RE and address curriculum balance. There were also key-note speakers on the revisiting aspects of Religious Literacy and exploring RE and the realities of religion and beliefs. Please see the following full conference report.

On January 26<sup>th</sup> 2019, I attended my third 'Strictly RE' conference at the Park Inn by Radisson Hotel at Heathrow.

Having previously attended a large scale conference such as this, I knew exactly what to expect. Some who were attending for the first time reported being overwhelmed by the number of exhibitors, delegates and officials.

The venue was large in size, but I managed to navigate my way around and visited the majority of the exhibits by the end of the conference day. There was such a variety, ranging from publishing houses offering religious education literature such as Hodder Education and Oxford University Press, and Charities such as CAFOD and Christian Aid, religious organisations, exam boards and research centres (such as NATRE, RE today and Culham St Gabriel). Places of worship and museums also advertised their publications such as the Jewish Museum, St Paul's Cathedral and the Mandela Exhibitions. Everyone was willing to provide information, free gifts and support my developing knowledge of Religious matters.

The conference commenced with an introduction by Fiona Moss- executive officer of NATRE and a welcome from Ben Wood- the Chair of NATRE. The first key-note speech of the day was given by Professor Grace Davie of Exeter University. The focus of her talk was 'Religious Literacy.'

She shared the results of a survey carried out among 250 social scientists relating to the issue of social progress. (Please refer to the International Panel on Social Progress- [www.ipsp.org](http://www.ipsp.org)) She had been asked to co-ordinate the chapter on Religion. She felt she needed to convince the panel that Religion has a part to play in social progress, especially when it comes to 'lived religion' not merely owning a belief. She firmly believes that policy makers need to pay attention to the role of religious ideas practices communities and leaders and the at these can be used for good or ill but should never be ignored. She advocated that good conversations in the classroom are vital in establishing a positive attitude towards religions and getting children interested in discussions about religion is really important as they may be the ones who go on to initiate change in society. She emphasised that religion can be toxic and therefore we need to teach it right and give children a wider picture of the nature of religion locally, nationally and globally so that they are properly equipped sand prepared for life in a pluralized society where 80% of the global population claim a religious identity.

After the coffee break, I attended two from a wide choice of seminars: firstly "Playing Around in RE", where Lat Blaylock (Adviser with RE Today), in his usual captivating manner, delivered a session on using a variety of game-based lessons to explore religious concepts, beliefs and practices that could be used form pupils at KS2/3/4.

This session was interactive and extremely engaging, involving lots of fun and laughter, as well as some good discussion about how different approaches might be adapted to suit different settings and topics. Lat proposed that learning done as a game is powerful and encouraged delegates to make RE creative by inventing games of their own. I was reminded

of the “Talk-Less Teaching” approach advocated by Isabella Wallace, since many of the game strategies were very much student-led, with the teacher standing back as an observer, allowing them the opportunity to identify misconceptions that could be addressed later in the lesson, or explored through further discussion.

My second seminar was “Conversations About RE Curriculum Balance” with Olivia Seymour (Assistant Director of Education at the Diocese of York) and Dr Kathryn Wright (Independent RE Adviser working for the Diocese of Norwich and St Culham Gabriel’s Trust)

At the centre of their findings is the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to RE – the “three-legged stool”: Theology, Philosophy and Human/Social Science (<https://balancedre.org.uk>). RE should encompass

Believing

Thinking

Living

There should be an equal balance of these across the RE curriculum. They were promoting more classroom conversations to develop pupils’ religious literacy. Delegates were asked to create a diamond 9 of a series of statements relating to the priorities and purposes of RE followed by discussion about the role of RE plays in the wider school curriculum. Two self-auditing tools were provided to support delegates in self-auditing the balance of the three disciplines with their own RE curriculum as well as giving out sets of questions relating these to supporting questioning at different key stages. They also previewed a new sample assessment resource from the Diocese of Norwich offering a balanced approach to assessment in RE with age-related expectations.

The final Keynote speech of the day was given by Lat Blaylock and Stephen Pett (both advisers for RE today). Their talk was entitled ‘RE and the realities of Religion and Belief. They spoke about the challenges of how to ensure high quality balanced RE provision without sanitising or ‘satanising’ (Joyce Miller- chair of RE council) They presented a case study into the ways religions are represented in society using excerpts from a new BBC GCSE series of 10 short biopics entitled ‘ A day in the Faith of .....’ They encouraged delegates to explore the wide range of other resources produced by the BBC to support teaching and learning in RE. Lat and Stephen advocated the use of accurate and fair representations of religions and quoted from the ‘Perils of Perception’ survey highlighting mis-conceptions about the nature and impact of religion ( [www.brin.ac.uk](http://www.brin.ac.uk) British Religion in Numbers). They recommended the following two authors’ works as pertinent reading- James Sire-the Universe Next Door and Julian Baggini, ‘How the World Thinks’.

The difference between orthodoxy and orthopraxy was explored- ‘truth- seeking’ and ‘way-seeking’. They conferred that 4 year olds have an already strongly developed worldview before they even enter the classroom and that we as RE practitioners, will have a number of tensions to contend with as we also help to shape their worldview by what and how we teach.

All in all, it was a very enjoyable day with lots of food for thought as well as practical ideas to support teachers in the classrooms. I then shared this information in a net-work meeting two days later.

It was lovely to meet with fellow practitioners and catch up with colleagues from across different setting and phases of education, sharing experiences and ideas.

