

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday, 9 July 2014
2.00 pm
Kingston Centre, Stafford

John Tradewell
Director of Democracy and Transformation
1 July 2014

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies**
2. **Welcome to New Members**
3. **Declaration of Any other Business**
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014** (Pages 1 - 6)
5. **An Update on Key Issues** (Pages 7 - 28)
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People
6. **NASACRE Update** (Pages 29 - 44)
Oral Report of the Chairman
7. **Applications for Variation of Practice** (Pages 45 - 46)
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People
8. **The SACRE Budget 2013-2014** (Pages 47 - 48)
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People



9. **Agreed Syllabus Review** (Pages 49 - 56)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People

- a) Convening of the Agreed Syllabus Conference
- b) Minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on 12 February 2014

10. **Implications from "Trojan Horse" investigations in Birmingham** (Pages 57 - 58)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People

11. **20+ Ideas for SACRE** (Pages 59 - 60)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People

12. **AOB**

13. **Date of next SACRE meeting**

The next SACRE meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 12 November, 2.00pm

Membership

Barrie Scott	Sam Phillips
Mick Dwyer	Sue Blackmore
Sonia Andjelkovic	Mary Gale
Ann Hewetson	Colin Hopkins
Diana Cutler	Rosemary Woodward
Tajinder Singh	Peter Davies
Paul Lewis	Terry Finn
Christine Chadwick	Tricia Budd
G Devadason	Liz Williams
Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal (Vice-Chairman)	Conor Wileman
Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf (Chairman)	David Williams
Dr Laow	Caroline Wood
Liz O'Brien	Bill Walley
Muhammad Parekh	

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 12 February 2014

Present: **Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf**

Sonia Andjelkovic, Diana Cutler, Jane Essex, Dr Laow, Liz O'Brien, Muhammad Parekh, Sam Phillips, Sue Blackmore, Peter Davies, Terry Finn, Liz Williams and Caroline Wood

Apologies for absence: Barrie Scott, Mick Dwyer, Ann Hewetson, Paul Lewis, Christine Chadwick, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Colin Hopkins, Rosemary Woodward, Conor Wileman and David Williams

Also in attendance - Helen Phillips and Emma Jardine

PART ONE

13. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 13 November 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

14. An Update on Key Issues

SACRE received an update on the proposed review of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus. Since their last meeting a letter had been sent on SACRE's behalf, and at their request, to Mr Ben Adams, Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, requesting his authorisation for SACRE to review the Syllabus. Members received a copy of this letter and a copy of the Cabinet Member's response, giving his authorisation.

The Chairman noted the kind and supportive words from the Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be noted.

15. Agreed Syllabus Review

The Education Act 1993 required the Local Authority (LA) to institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus every five years after the completion of its last review. The last revision of the Agreed Syllabus had been issued to schools in 2009 and at their meeting of 13 November 2013 SACRE resolved to write to the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, highlighting the need for a review and seeking approval to set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to undertake this review.

SACRE had previously received a copy of this correspondence and the Cabinet Member's approval to convene the ASC.

Members noted the high regard that the original Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus had. This had been produced in 1992/93, largely led by Paul Bellingham, and had remained in tact with slight adjustments for over twenty years, a testament to its quality.

Since the last syllabus revision in 2009 there had been a number of major changes in education which had a direct impact on Religious Education (RE). These included:

- a) from September 2013 a new curriculum would be introduced to all schools (Key Stages (KS) 1-4) with a clear focus on slimming down the curriculum to allow for more cross curriculum dimensions and inter-disciplinary studies and the removal of levels of attainment. RE needed to take account of these changes in order to play a full and active role in the new curriculum;
- b) in 2012 the REC completed a review of the current National Non-Statutory Framework for RE.

SACRE considered the level of review they wished to undertake and the cost implications. If undertaking a more radical review Members wished to ensure the syllabus had the flexibility to be purchased and used by other authorities whilst being pertinent to Staffordshire. It was understood that Staffordshire teachers would welcome a syllabus that included more supportive materials to help support their teaching and work planning. This was particularly important for the non RE specialist teachers of RE.

If a more radical review was to be undertaken it would be necessary to have officer time and support to carry out the work needed. Lat Blaylock (a well respected expert in RE and part of the RE Today team) had been approached to give an estimate of cost and process should SACRE choose to use his expertise in reviewing the Staffordshire syllabus. Lat had a successful background in this field.

The funding required for this review would be between £15,000 and £20,000 in total. Whilst the SACRE budget could fund part of this there would be a significant shortfall and it was suggested that the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, be approached in the first instance. A business case would then be produced for Entrust for any further funding required.

It was proposed that SACRE convene an agreed syllabus conference to request the Local Authority review the agreed syllabus. A formal vote was taken and each committee recorded a vote in favour of convening the conference.

RESOLVED – That; a) SACRE convene an agreed syllabus conference and request that the Local Authority reconsider its agreed syllabus; and,
b) the recommendations of the agreed syllabus conference be conveyed to the Entrust Consultant and the LA for amendments if necessary.

[Note by Clerk: The SACRE meeting was formally closed whilst the Agreed Syllabus Conference was convened. Once the Agreed Syllabus Conference had concluded the SACRE meeting formally re-opened.]

16. Application for Westhill/NASACRE Award

Liz O'Brien and Jane Essex had previously agreed to consider possible projects around the parity of provision of RE for all children, irrespective of ability, and bring suggestions

back to SACRE as a potential submission for the Westhill Trust/NASACRE annual award. Members received a paper outlining the background journey to the proposed project and heard from Liz and Jane on their proposed submission.

The proposed project would build on recent work undertaken at the University of Aberdeen which had led to the setting up of the Kairos Forum.

The project had two aspects:

- to bring into one place and make available guidance on what resources already existed for RE and collective worship; and
- produce a practical resource with exemplar sample lessons for producing exciting RE for young people working within P scales, giving them the opportunity to explore stories from different faiths as a way into narrating their own stories.

The work would include a multi-sensory approach to RE and make use of symbol supported text.

In applying for a Westhill grant it was important to be clear about the anticipated budget and what this money would be used for. For this proposed project funding would be required for purchasing the use of symbol supported text and to allow both Jane and Liz time from their work to undertake the project.

Any submission for grants had to be in by the end of March and SACRE agreed to delegate the project approval to the Chairman and Emma Jardine, Entrust Consultant for RE.

RESOLVED – That SACRE support the proposed project, delegating final approval of the submission to the Chairman and Entrust Consultant for RE.

17. An Analysis of Examination Results 2013

SACRE received an analysis of the standards achieved in GCSE full and short courses, A Level and AS GCE religious studies by pupils examined in the summer 2013.

Key issues taken from an analysis of the results were:

- a) Overall entries for 2013 GCSE full course had risen whilst short course entries had fallen reflecting the change in the examination system;
- b) The number of pupils gaining A*-C at GCSE had risen above the national average for the second year running;
- c) the number of students gaining A*-C grades on the GCSE short course was broadly in line with the national figures;
- d) 84 students across 23 schools were entered for AS level and 176 students across 25 schools were entered for A level, which represented a small drop in entries;
- e) recruitment of boys to both the A level and AS level course remained an issue;
- f) the percentage of pupils gaining higher grades A-B was below the national figure for AS level, although broadly in line with national figures for A level; and,
- g) attainment at AS level continued to be an issue.

Emma Jardine, Entrust consultant for RE, informed SACRE that one teacher had expressed concerns at the way the analysis had been published for Members, feeling that highlighting those schools that had achieved below the national average was unhelpful and unsupportive. Members had a lengthy discussion on the best way to receive the examination result data. Whilst not wishing to undermine teaching staff it was important that they were aware of the achievements throughout Staffordshire schools and that they gained a clear picture of where further support could be effective in driving improvements. On reflection members agreed to receive the information in one table and for any conclusions to be drawn from this table during the SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED – That: a) the analysis of examination results be received;
b) a letter of congratulations be sent to those schools that achieved above national average results, with a letter offering support being sent to those schools achieving below the national average at A*-C grades; and,
c) future examination results be reported in one table to SACRE, with conclusions being drawn during the meeting.

18. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave an update on recent NASACRE developments, including:

- NASACRE would shortly be issuing requests for information from SACREs on their current situation, for example the number of meetings held, their resource base etc. This information would be very helpful once drawn together;
- the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE had invited a representative from NASACRE to their first meeting which considered teacher training, however two individual SACREs had been invited to their second meeting on community cohesion, rather than NASACRE, which was a little curious;
- REC had invited local SACREs to write to their local Member of Parliament (MP) highlighting the importance of RE in respect of community cohesion. The Chairman had written to the Stafford MP Jeremy Lefroy, on behalf of the Staffordshire SACRE, and a copy of this letter was circulated to members;
- the new arrangements with the password protected NASACRE web-site were working well in encouraging SACREs to pay their subscriptions promptly; and
- the NASACRE Annual General Meeting was scheduled for Thursday 22 May, Central Hall, Westminster. The main speaker this year would be Stephen Lloyd MP.

RESOLVED – That the update be received.

19. Applications for Variation of Practice

There were none at this meeting.

20. The SACRE Budget 2013-2014

Members were informed that any remaining budget for this academic year would be used to support the Agreed Syllabus Review.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

21. AOB

1. Jane Essex informed SACRE that sadly the RE teacher training course at Keele University would no longer be run as there had been insufficient applications. SACRE wished to find out if this was a wide spread problem and it was agreed that this issue would be explored with REC to identify whether this situation was repeated elsewhere.
2. Dr Loaw informed SACRE that consideration was being given to organising a children's day at the Buddhist Temple in Kings Bromley and asked whether SACRE would like to be a part of this. This could be something to consider at their next meeting.
3. The next SACRE meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 9 July, 2.00pm, Kingston Centre, Stafford. An email with the subsequent dates had been sent to all SACRE Members.

**Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Chairman**

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
9th July 2014
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People
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
Telephone number:

Emma Jardine
01785 27799

RE and Tolerance: Early Day Motion

SACRE members are being encouraged to write / contact encourage their MP and ask him/her to sign this early day motion:

That this House notes that Religious Education (RE) is a rigorous academic subject that allows young people to increase their knowledge and understanding of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs; further notes the importance of mutual understanding and the community cohesion it engenders, particularly at this time of heightened tension; recognises the contribution the subject RE plays in fostering mutual understanding and respect between people with different religious and non-religious beliefs; supports the efforts of schools and local authorities who give RE the attention and status it merits in the curriculum; and urges that measures to ensure that all children explore and discuss religious and non-religious beliefs at school be pursued by the Government.

Date tabled: 18.06.2013

Primary sponsor: Lloyd, Stephen

Sponsors: Russell, Bob; Durkan, Mark; Shannon, Jim; Meale, Alan; Dobbin, Jim.

On 1st July there were 38 signatures

RE and Academies

With the number of Academies in Staffordshire gradually increasing it would seem timely to refresh our understanding of RE provision in Academies and the role of SACRE within that.

The NASACRE leaflet offers ways in which SACREs can give support and guidance to Academies with RE and the use of the locally agreed syllabus.

Two further useful documents compiled by NATRE are also attached for reference:

- The first provides some responses to this question: Can/should the SACRE monitor the work of Academies in RE and collective worship or must they be allowed to 'go their own way'? It also includes a statement from the DfE about the legal requirement for RE in Academies and the role of the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA).
- The second is a Q&A document about RE and collective worship in Academies and Free Schools.

SACRE members may like to use these documents as the basis for issuing advice to schools in their area to clarify for them the current statutory requirements for RE and/or collective worship.

Young Ambassadors for RE

The Religious Education Council have launched a Young Ambassadors for RE scheme and are inviting schools to apply. As our own Student Council for RE no longer runs this scheme could be a suitable replacement. A leaflet is attached which could be circulated to schools if SACRE members felt it would be worthwhile pursuing.

Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools Q&A

1. Are Free Schools subject to the same requirements as Academies?

Free Schools are Academies in law and have the same requirement to provide RE and collective worship. In this document, any reference to Academies includes Free Schools.

2. Do Academies have to provide RE?

Yes, under the terms of their Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, all Academies have to provide RE for all their pupils, except for those whose parents exercise the right of withdrawal. The type of RE specified in the Funding Agreement depends on whether or not the Academy has a religious designation, and for converter Academies, on whether the predecessor school was a voluntary controlled (VC), Voluntary aided (VA) or foundation school.

3. Does an Academy with a religious designation have to follow a particular RE syllabus?

Other than for Academies where the predecessor school was a VC or foundation school, the model funding agreement specifies that an Academy with a religious designation must provide RE in accordance with the tenets of the particular faith specified in the designation. They may, in addition, provide RE that is in line with a locally agreed syllabus and teach about other faiths if they choose.

4. What is a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)?

A SACRE is a permanent body which must be established by each local authority. LAs must appoint representatives to each of four committees, representing respectively:

- Group A: Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area
- Group B: the Church of England
- Group C: teacher associations
- Group D: the LA

5. What is the role of a SACRE in relation to Academies?

A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) has a statutory remit to advise the Local Authority on Religious Education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus and to support the effective provision of collective worship. A SACRE also has within its powers to discuss any matter related to its functions as it sees fit and may therefore include the provision of RE in Academies in its discussions or address such matters as may be referred to

it. An Academy or group of academies can be represented through co-option onto the local SACRE (or indeed any SACRE) if all parties are in agreement.

6. What is a locally agreed syllabus?

An agreed syllabus is a religious education syllabus that is designed by a local authority's Agreed Syllabus Conference ('ASC') primarily for use in the Local Authority's (LA) maintained schools but which may be adopted by a different local authority or Academy as its provision for Religious Education. The syllabus, like the provision for RE in Academies, must reflect that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. There is a structure for establishing an ASC which is defined in law. An ASC must have four committees, comprising representatives from the Church of England, other Christian denominations and religions, teachers and the LA. Each Committee has voting rights in coming to an agreement on the syllabus, which it recommends to the LA for adoption.

There is no requirement for an Academy to adopt a locally agreed syllabus. It may choose to adopt a different syllabus or develop its own, as long as it meets the requirements for such a syllabus as above. Academies are accountable for the quality of their curricular provision including RE.

7. What type of RE will an Academy that is not designated with a religious character provide?

The Funding Agreement for an Academy without a religious designation states that it must arrange for RE to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses that are set out in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph '(5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This means a syllabus that reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. It also means that an Academy without a religious designation must not provide an RE syllabus to pupils by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination.

This gives an Academy without a religious designation the freedom to design its own RE syllabus (within those constraints) and not be bound by the specific locally agreed syllabus that maintained schools are required to follow. However, Academies are free to follow the locally agreed syllabus if they choose or they can choose another from a different Local Authority area.

8. Are there any variations to the general position as described?

Some non-denominational Academies with a religious designation (e.g. those designated as 'Christian') have funding agreements specifying that they will use the locally agreed syllabus. Academies that opened early in the Academies Programme before around 2004 have a general requirement to provide RE and collective worship. However the detailed requirements may differ. It would be

wise for the EFA to check the specific FA wording if they receive a query about the detailed requirement for RE in a very old Academy. The position is also different in former foundation or voluntary controlled faith schools that have converted to Academies and this is explained below.

9. What is the position for former voluntary controlled and foundation schools with a religious designation that have converted to Academies?

Foundation or voluntary controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to Academies must arrange for RE in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses (in the main Christian whilst taking account of the other principal religions etc as set out above) unless any parents request that their children receive RE in accordance with the tenets of the school's faith. If any parents do request this, the Academy must make arrangements for those children to receive such RE unless, because of special circumstances, it would be unreasonable to do so. The Funding Agreement sets this out (by applying the relevant provisions of the Education Act 1996 and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998). In practice these Academies generally choose to follow the locally agreed syllabus.

10. Do all Academies have to offer a daily act of collective worship?

An Academy's Funding Agreement is drafted to mirror the requirements for acts of collective worship in maintained schools. Each pupil must take part in a daily act of collective worship unless they have been withdrawn by their parents, or if in the sixth form they have decided to withdraw themselves. This applies to Academies with and without a religious designation.

11. What kind of collective worship would an Academy with a religious designation provide?

Such an Academy must provide collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy's designated faith. It can also choose to reflect the other principal religions and those found in the local community.

12. Does the above apply to former voluntary controlled or foundation schools with a religious designation that have converted to Academies?

Yes. They must provide collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy's designated faith.

13. In an Academy without a religious designation, does the act of collective worship have to be broadly Christian in nature?

Such an Academy must provide collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. A school can reflect the religious backgrounds represented in its community, as long as the majority of provision is broadly Christian.

14. Can an Academy without a religious designation apply for exemption from providing broadly Christian collective worship?

Yes. A maintained school can apply to the local SACRE for an exemption not to provide broadly Christian collective worship for some or all of its pupils, having considered the family background of pupils attending the school. An equivalent provision applies to Academies but the Academy Trust would apply, through the EFA, to the Secretary of State for the determination. Such a determination does not mean that the Academy or school would be exempted from providing any collective worship. They would still be required to provide daily collective worship, but of a different character that is more appropriate given the family backgrounds of the pupils in the school. The Secretary of State may approach the local SACRE for its view when considering such an application.

15. Can parents withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship?

Yes. Parents of children in Academies have an equivalent right to parents of children in maintained schools, to withdraw their children from religious education and or collective worship.

Please note that pupils over compulsory school age (16) can opt out of collective worship if they wish however they cannot opt out of receiving Religious Education.

16. Who inspects RE and collective worship in Academies with a religious designation?

Religiously designated Academies are required by their funding agreement to arrange for the inspection of any denominational RE and collective worship. In line with the arrangements for designated maintained schools, Academies, when choosing an inspector, must consult the relevant religious authority.

- (a) CofE / Catholic: the appropriate diocesan authority;
- (b) Jewish (note this is non-denominational): the Jewish Studies Education Inspection Service;
- (c) Methodist: the Education Secretary of the Methodist Church;
- (d) Muslim: the Association of Muslim Schools;
- (e) Sikh: Network of Sikh Organisations;
- (f) Seventh Day Adventist: the Education Department of the British Union Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist

17. How is RE and collective worship inspected in Academies without a religious designation?

Section 48 inspections, section 5 and Ofsted subject survey visits of Academies follow the same format as those of maintained schools. Judgements about RE are made in relation to the requirements which are applied to RE in the funding agreement. Where an academy has chosen to follow a locally agreed syllabus that will be used as the basis for judging standards and provision. Where no alternative arrangement for judging standards and progress has been developed or adopted, the expectations set out in the non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education (2004) will be used as a benchmark for National Standards. The quality of the provision is judged in terms of how well it secures progress towards the expected pupil outcomes.

Can/should the SACRE monitor the work of Academies in RE and collective worship or must they be allowed to 'go their own way'?

Part 1

Academies are independently funded state schools, outside the remit of the LA and therefore of the SACRE.

There are two types of academies: those set up by the present Coalition administration and those established by the previous government. All academies are required to teach RE.

The new academies have to do so according to their funding agreements, which can be amended; without recourse to the law, by the Secretary of State. For that reason, the statutory requirement for RE has been lifted for the first time since 1870.

Guidance produced by the previous government stipulated that all academies (at that time) should follow their locally agreed syllabus. This strengthened the wording of the existing funding agreements of the earliest academies, that academies should 'take account of their local agreed syllabus'. However the status of this advice in respect of these academies is now uncertain because of the post-election change of administration.

Current advice from the DfE says new academies must provide RE according to the requirements for new local agreed syllabuses [as set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act]. NASACRE interprets this as meaning the agreed syllabus for the local authority area in which the Academy is based.

SACREs are increasingly opening up their previous contacts, or establishing new relationships with the academies in their area, in a variety of ways.

Some are inviting representatives of Academies in their LAs to be co-opted onto the SACRE. Increasingly SACREs are also approaching their main Academy sponsors to offer support for their provision for RE and to try to establish what their position is on RE and collective worship. Such sponsors (Ark, Harris, and Ormiston for example) have 'families' of Academies which cover a number of LA areas and/or form a cluster within a given LA.

The recently published RETool for SACRE self evaluation looks at relations with the Academies sector and helps SACREs assess how effectively they encourage Academies to see themselves also as stakeholders in their local area, specifically by devising ways in which an academies presence is incorporated into the SACRE itself.

Such cooperation not only supports good working practice with advice and builds positive relationships within a locality but also affirms the value of RE and demonstrates the mutual benefit to partners of working together for pupils and communities.

Part 2

The Academies Act 2010 paved the way for the 'new style' Academies announced by the Coalition Government. The Act removed from Academies and free schools the statutory requirement, in force since 1870, for all maintained schools to provide RE in the curriculum and a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. The model funding agreements for such schools does require such provision but does not require a school to use a locally agreed syllabus. It is not clear whether these provisions of the Act also apply to the 'old style' Academies.

The Education Bill currently passing through Parliament may bring in further changes.

In response to issues raised by NATRE in February 2011, the DfE has stated:

'Academies must provide religious education in accordance with their Funding Agreements. The policy intention is for the model Funding Agreements to broadly reflect the provisions that apply to local authorities and schools in the maintained sector. The Funding Agreement requires that Academies with a religious designation provide religious education in accordance with the tenets of their faith and Academies that do not have a religious designation must arrange for religious education to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for Agreed Syllabuses. In other words, a curriculum which reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. For foundation or voluntary controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to Academies, the intention is that they will arrange for religious education in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses, as set out above, unless any parents request that their children receive religious education in accordance with any provisions of the school's trust deed or in accordance with the tenets of the school's faith. If any parents do request this, the Academy must make arrangements for those children to receive such religious education unless, because of special circumstances, it would be unreasonable to do so. The Funding Agreement sets this out.'

With regard to **compliance** the DfE has also stated:

'The YPLA monitors compliance with Funding Agreements and also deals with complaints about Academies on behalf of the Secretary of State. If you or any of your members would like to raise a concern about an Academy with regard to RE provision then please send details to academiesenquiries@ypla.gov.uk and the YPLA will investigate.'

Furthermore, the YPLA itself has since indicated that if a person or body wished to raise a concern about a specific Academy they could send the query stating the name of the Academy to academiesenquiries@ypla.gov.uk and it will be forwarded to the YPLA Academies Lead Officer (ALO) responsible for dealing with issues relating to that specific Academy: the ALO will then liaise with either the person or body concerned. It was been stressed that individuals (who may be teachers) can








choose to remain anonymous during any discussions between the ALO and the Academy but considering the specific nature of the query, this may be problematic. However, the ALO could approach the Academy simply stating that the query is from a concerned member of the community who wishes to remain anonymous.

Following enactment of the Education Act 2011, the functions described above transfer to the Education Funding Agency from the YPLA in April 2012.

BG/12/11




▶ The experience of one Academy

"I wrote to my Chair of Governors to explain the functions of SACRE. I recommended we continue to use the locally agreed syllabus for reasons of:

-  continuity with existing schemes of work;
-  ease of transition from KS2;
-  reflections of the local context;
-  coherence with national documentation;
-  support for the implementation of the AS;
-  established close links with the SACRE;
-  earlier involvement by the school in development work on assessment.

It was important to have clarity on these issues so that we could update the department policies to reflect our new arrangements."

Karen Steele, Head of RE,
Stratford Grammar School for Girls

-  **Would you welcome opportunities for support?**
-  **Would you appreciate some guidance on curriculum?**
-  **Would you like to be able to talk to colleagues from other schools?**

Then your local SACRE is there to help you...
why not make contact?

SACRE will be pleased to hear from you. You can find contact details through the Local Authority or SACRE website. For more information, read on...

You can find out more about the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and about the work of your local SACRE at: www.nasacre.org.uk

Take a look!
You may find it will help

YOU

and your pupils



about your

RE

A message to Head Teachers,
Chairs of Governors
and Subject Leaders of
Religious Education
in
Academies and Free Schools

From the National Association of
Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

- ▶ Are you responsible for the leadership of religious education in your school?
- ▶ How clear are you about the duty on you to provide RE for all pupils?

The Department for Education says:

Academies must provide religious education in accordance with their Funding Agreements. The policy intention is for the model Funding Agreements to broadly reflect the provisions that apply to local authorities and schools in the maintained sector. The Funding Agreement requires that Academies with a religious designation provide religious education in accordance with the tenets of their faith and Academies that do not have a religious designation must arrange for religious education to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for Agreed Syllabuses. In other words, a curriculum which reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.

HMI Alan Brine says:

Ofsted inspections of schools and academies will continue to focus on the curriculum. Recent guidance to inspectors has reiterated that a curriculum with breadth and balance is likely to consist of the National Curriculum subjects, religious education (RE) and a variety of other courses and programmes. Where a school does not provide the National Curriculum and RE, there is an expectation that inspectors will need to fully explore the school's reasons. In addition, inspectors will be gathering evidence of the impact of the curriculum on promoting aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Guidance to inspectors highlights that RE, along with art and music, are obvious examples of subjects that promote SMSC provision.

- ▶ Why are SACREs a good idea?
- ▶ How much do you know about your SACRE?

SACREs:

- ✿ ensure the local involvement and shaping of the RE provided in the area;
- ✿ provide opportunities to raise awareness of and explore sensitivities in RE teaching;
- ✿ support consistency and progression in RE teaching across the phases of education;
- ✿ advise the LA, Government and schools of training needs of teachers of RE arising in the locality;
- ✿ monitor quality and encourage improvement in RE and collective worship;
- ✿ provide a public forum for the local RE community.

- ▶ What do SACREs do for their local communities?

SACREs:

- ✿ work for social harmony and purposeful collaboration;
- ✿ use local diversity of interests and backgrounds as a curriculum resource;
- ✿ encourage creative and imaginative exploration of RE and collective worship for young people in the community;
- ✿ encourage and support collaborative activities and ventures;
- ✿ promote the value of high quality RE and collective worship for good community spirit.

- ▶ How could you benefit from working with your local SACRE?

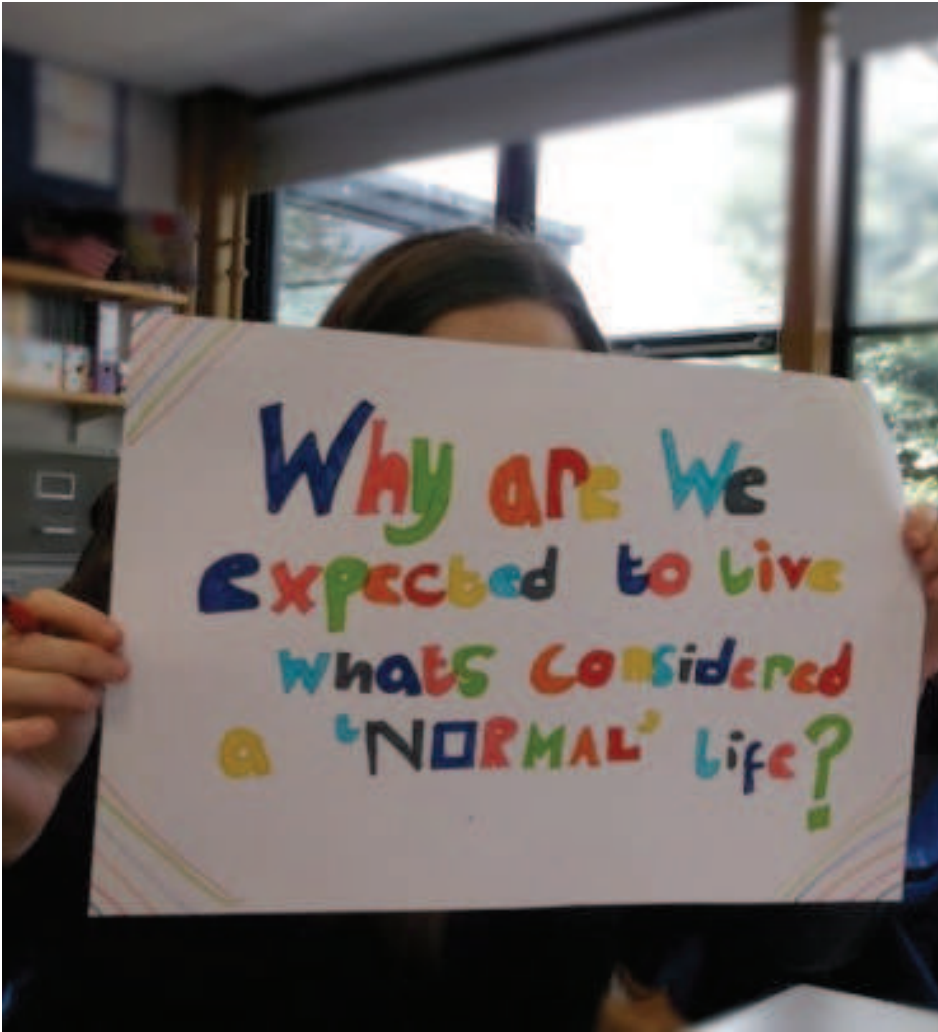
Your local SACRE would help you to:

- ✿ keep abreast of developments in RE teaching and in collective worship;
- ✿ become part of an RE support network
- ✿ offer a structure for your RE curriculum which is consistent with that of your partner schools across the age ranges;
- ✿ access support and training materials ;
- ✿ ensure that the needs of schools and teachers are considered in developing RE teaching;
- ✿ access local faith community representatives and community based resources;
- ✿ obtain direct information on possible places to visit and speakers to invite into schools

- ▶ Are you responsible for the planning of RE?
- ▶ Do you ever feel isolated?

There is no national syllabus in RE. Each local authority has the responsibility for producing its own agreed syllabus and of sustaining a Standing Advisory Council in RE (SACRE) to support the provision of RE in its schools.

All maintained schools except those voluntary aided schools with a religious character have a statutory duty to follow the locally agreed syllabus for RE. This makes for coherence and continuity in the RE curriculum and in pupils' learning. It also encourages teachers in a local authority to collaborate, pool resources and to benefit from each others' strengths in planning exciting learning opportunities for their pupils. Academies, Free Schools and other designations can choose to opt into this and we would encourage them to do so for the benefits above.



YOUNG AMBASSADORS

FOR RE

#ya4RE. BE PART OF IT



BE PART OF A NATIONAL SCHEME TO PROMOTE THE VALUE OF RE

AS A YOUNG AMBASSADOR FOR RE YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT IN YOUR OWN SCHOOL AND BEYOND



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL
OF ENGLAND AND WALES

14-22 Elder Street
London E1 6BT

religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk

[youngambassadors@
religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk](mailto:youngambassadors@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)

twitter.com/REC_Youth

Young Ambassadors in the pilot scheme said they had...

- been challenged and pushed to do things beyond their expectations
- felt noticed, developed leadership skills and become role models for younger pupils, and taken on a role on behalf of the school
- developed greater ability to work as members of a team but have also involved others beyond their teams, breaking down boundaries of age and stage
- experienced a sense of purpose and motivation and a confidence that their voices would be heard
- gained new skills and interests (e.g. public speaking, movie making and IT)
- developed a sense of shared experience with fellow enthusiasts for RE

YOUNG AMBASSADORS FOR RE IS A NEW SCHEME ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES, RUN BY THE RE COUNCIL.

THE RE COUNCIL CHAMPIONS RE AT ALL LEVELS FROM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TO POLITICIANS AND POLICY MAKERS.



THIS SCHEME GIVES STUDENTS AGED 11-18 OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- meet and debate with other young people about why RE matters
- share their enthusiasm and interest for RE and gain leadership experience
- give their perspectives to adults who work to support RE at the highest levels, such as local councils and MPs in parliament
- develop skills in communicating successfully to a wide range of audiences
- build up relevant experience for college, UCAS or job applications and personal statements
- receive an RE Council certificate of commendation given to all who complete their time as a Young Ambassador.

TEACHERS SAY THE SCHEME HAS:

- raised the profile of the subject and promoted it to pupils, parents and across the whole school community; where RE was already good, it has become even better; it has helped to raise the awareness of colleagues about the value of RE and increased their understanding about its links with other subjects across the curriculum..
- provided excellent professional development opportunities, including enabling teachers to learn from what other schools were doing, being a source of inspiration for new teachers, creating the basis for work beyond teachers' own schools e.g. in making outreach to other schools and bodies such as the local SACRE, generating the motivation to develop new skills (e.g. use of Twitter).
- given teachers the pleasure of seeing students flourish and develop leadership experience and of seeing other staff impressed by their maturity and ability expressed in RE activity; having the satisfaction of seeing a positive impact on students who may not do brilliantly in other areas but have a pride in their achievements and in knowing how to behave responsibly as an ambassador.

The YA scheme helps teachers to connect RE to wider educational issues and current affairs. It can contribute to the dynamism of RE provision through the voices of students, and support the professional development of any teacher taking part. For the school, the YA scheme has the potential to be part of strategies for SMSC provision in your departmental or school development plan, provide opportunities for positive media coverage, and contribute to criteria for the [RE Quality Mark](#).

In every school there are pupils who have a particular interest in or enthusiasm for RE. We want this scheme to enable them to share this with others, to give them the chance to take on a leadership role, to help their fellow students benefit from

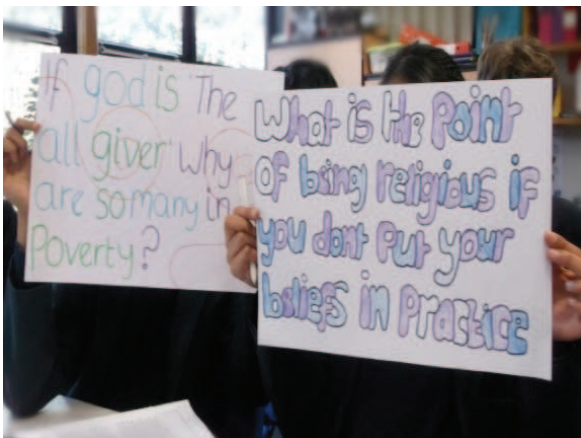
what the subject offers and to speak from their own experiences as young people. We want the subject to benefit from their insights, ideas and voices.



ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG AMBASSADORS

Young Ambassadors keep up to date with each other through the YA blog, on the RE Council website. Teams are free to develop their own ideas and programmes, but here are a few examples of activities that YA teams have done in 2012-2013.

- YAs at Broughton created a wall on Padlet, for students to share their ideas about why RE is important to society.
- YAs at The Redhill Academy uploaded a film about the importance of RE to Youtube, and regularly put up video updates of their activities.
- YAs at St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School visited a local primary school to run a mini-lessons on RE
- Several YA teams have created display boards about RE in their schools
- YAs at Perins surveyed the parents of students at the school to research their attitudes to RE



FOR MORE IDEAS VISIT THE YOUNG AMBASSADOR BLOG!

HOW MUCH OF A COMMITMENT IS THE SCHEME?

- Teachers in our pilot scheme said that working with a group of enthusiastic young students hardly added any extra work to their workload
- The REC can't offer any funding for the scheme, but your activities don't have to cost a thing. We will pay for any travel if we invite a team to speak on our behalf, or you can fundraise yourselves – another thing for students to put on the UCAS forms
- The time commitment is relatively flexible. It could be an after-school or lunch-time club, and can be run almost entirely by students if they take the initiative.

THE YA SCHEME AIMS TO BRING INTO CONTACT YOUNG PEOPLE FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY TO DEBATE, SHARE AND EXPLORE THE KINDS OF ISSUES THAT ARE THE STUFF OF WORTHWHILE AND CHALLENGING RE.

The scheme will provide outstanding opportunities for young people to be challenged, to gain leadership experience, and to engage in contact with others from around the country for debate and discussion. The best teams will have the chance to attend and present at meetings and conferences with others, and gain public speaking experience. Several of our teams from the pilot year have made presentations at Westminster, in front of MPs and Lords about the importance of RE to them and to the wider community.

HOW TO APPLY

Each school team will need to submit their answer to this question

WHY SHOULD WE LEARN ABOUT EACH OTHER'S BELIEFS AND VALUES?

Answers submitted can be in written/essay form (of around 500-750 words), or audio file/podcast, or as a short film uploaded to the web with a link we can follow to watch it. Then email your completed application form with either your submission or web link, to: youngambassadors@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk stating your name and

contact details at your school.



SELECTION CRITERIA

We are looking to recruit a maximum of one team per school, chosen as you think best. A team can consist of any three to five individuals between 11 and 18.

Students must have:

- Sincerity and curiosity about the world and a positive attitude towards others.
- Ability to communicate effectively and persuasively with their peers and others.
- Confidence in talking about their own values and beliefs, whether religious or not.
- A clear sense that inspiring religious education, with opportunities for critical reflection on different beliefs and values, is a right for all young people, whatever their backgrounds or world views.
- Strong commitment to and enjoyment of open and lively debate.
- Readiness to be Young Ambassadors for the rest of this school year, with the opportunity to continue if they have carried out the role successfully.



APPLICATION FORM

Name of school

Address

Phone number

School email address

Name of contact teacher

Contact teacher email address

Names and year groups of students
Enter the names of up to five students)

Name	Year group
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Headteacher/Principal declaration

I , of agree to this application for the above team of students to take part in the Young Ambassadors for RE scheme run by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales.

I am sending our student submission as:
Attachments should be in Word or pdf format.
Link URL:

Declaration

I understand that by entering this school team for the Young Ambassador scheme, I am agreeing to the REC's selection process and realise that only a limited number of schools can participate this year.

E-mail this completed form along with your student submission to:
youngambassadors@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
9th July 2014
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People**

An Update NASACRE

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 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 NASACRE is the national body of SACRE's. National meetings are held to which members of SACRE are invited and encouraged to attend. Issues are discussed which have local or national importance for RE.

4.2 Members will be briefed on any key developments.

4.3

5 Equal Opportunities

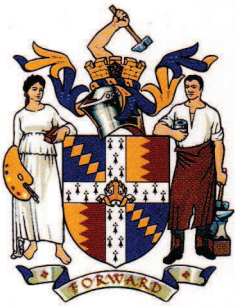
5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

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
Telephone number:

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May 2 2014

Dear SACRE Chair,

Attached to this message you will find a copy of a commentary on the Religious Education Council's (REC) Review of Religious Education (available at <http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/re-review-report>) which was launched in October 2013. This commentary was approved and endorsed by Birmingham SACRE on February 10th, 2014.

Birmingham SACRE encouraged and supported the REC in conducting a review of RE and endeavoured to help by submitting evidence based on our experience. We were, however, disappointed with both the process and the outcome of the REC review and are not convinced that the RE curriculum it has formulated will best help children to flourish and to contribute to society.

One point we made to the REC was that any review should canvass as widely as possible alternative views of RE and draw on their respective strengths. We also noted that the REC is a voluntary body and that statutory responsibility for RE still resides with Local Authorities and their respective SACREs. Any recommendations with respect to RE will need to have the backing of SACREs if they are to be implemented in Local Authority schools. The REC should have consulted widely and thoroughly with all SACREs. In correspondence with this SACRE the REC has admitted that they did not study the existing 150 Local Authority syllabuses as they thought it was not feasible and if RE professionals wanted to know what was in them they are all available publicly on the internet.

We have sent you our commentary prior to the NASACRE AGM in the hope that it will prompt discussion at that event and in local SACRE meetings. Your views and constructive proposals could be included in a shared complementary RE Review which is being prepared and which the Schools Minister said she was prepared to receive. Please circulate our commentary on the REC Review amongst your members, and their nominating bodies. Please send me your comments and your views on what should be in a complementary review which would make up for the shortcomings, as we see it, of the REC review.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Dr Barry Henley

Chair of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

At its meeting on February 10th 2014 all four Committees of the Birmingham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) approved and adopted this commentary of the Religious Education Council's (REC) Review of Religious Education which was launched in October 2013

Executive summary

1. The REC Review largely ignored representations from bodies with statutory responsibilities for RE. As a result the views of faith communities and local authority representatives on SACREs are not adequately reflected.
2. The outcome of the review defines the 'core curriculum' and therefore centralises the direction of RE and constrains the freedom of communities and faith bodies to define their RE syllabus to meet their local needs.
3. The RE Review is unclear about the purpose of RE. While nominally accepting the benefits of 'learning from' religion it assumes that religions should be examined simplistically as human constructs that some people happen to adopt and others not. It constrains itself to merely 'learning about' religion.
4. The proposed non-statutory curriculum framework for Religious Education (NCFRE) while descriptive of religions, does not incorporate teaching how (through religious observance or non-religious adherence to a moral code) pupils can contribute to betterment of society through practice of behaviours such as charity, truthfulness, beauty, goodness or love. This misses the societal aspect of RE teaching which is highly valued by OFSTED.
5. The Review's Non-statutory Curriculum Framework for RE is mistaken in supposing there must be one common core to RE teaching to achieve the overarching aims of education. The very nature of a multi-cultural and multi-faith society supposes that different traditions of teaching and practices can *all* lead to varying degrees of spiritual and moral depth.
6. The RE Review is correct in seeing that the structural changes in education brought in by the 2010 Academies Act and by other decisions of the Secretary of State for Education will potentially have a detrimental impact on the quality of provision in RE. Since RE was the responsibility of Local Authorities, the 2010 Academies Act is subverting the roles and the supporting structures of SACREs

and ASCs. It is denying faith communities a role in defining the RE syllabus and effectively restricting the powers of the Church of England as the established Church to share in the determination of what is taught in state-funded schools without a religious foundation.

1. Introduction

1-1 The authors of the RE review are to be commended for their good intentions and the serious efforts they have put into developing the policies and strategies which they believe will lead to better religious education for all young people in this country. None of what follows is to cast any doubts on their goodwill yet we believe that the course they have set will lead the ‘RE community’ into a desert where it and the religious education they hope to provide to young people will perish. This will happen because they do not fully realise what the political will is that keeps RE alive in schools. This misjudgment begins with the complex process they have followed, which is then exacerbated by their understanding of the purpose, aims, content and pedagogy of RE.

2. Process

2-1 There appears to be a kind of forgetfulness in the Religious Education Council (REC) and, for that matter, on the part of the government and the Department for Education. The REC is a *voluntary body* made up of interested individuals who may or may not represent or consult with the bodies they are said to represent. Much is made in the RE review of the process they have followed to come to their conclusions, so their forgetfulness cannot be attributed to simple carelessness. They have overlooked the fact that whereas the REC is a voluntary body, there are also *statutory bodies* that actually have legal responsibility for offering advice, monitoring and overseeing the delivery of RE in schools and for providing the syllabus for RE in local community schools, namely, Local Authority Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) and Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs).

2-2 In reviewing RE one might have expected the REC reviewers systematically to consult the statutory bodies, but they did not. Two SACREs insisted on offering evidence to the ‘panel of experts’. The panel of experts, however, failed fully to engage with them, and did not discuss their evidence in the review. They might beneficially have analysed and discussed the reasons why, for example, some SACREs/ASCs did not follow the Non-Statutory

National Framework for RE drawn up by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the DfE in 2004.

2-3 One of the reasons for the failure to consult the statutory bodies might be that whilst they did not consult with *individual* SACREs, the REC did have the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) as one of its affiliated bodies. However, as the current chair of NASACRE, Lesley Prior explained in an e-mail “NASACRE’s role is not to express views on behalf of its members ... Rather, it is our place to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of those SACREs are acknowledged and respected within the current legal arrangements.” But even NASACRE could hardly be claimed actually to have endorsed the Review’s published report when, according to her, immediately prior to the publication of the report “the final version of the report has not yet been made available for circulation to member bodies, including NASACRE, so we have not discussed it at our recent Officers’ and Executive Meetings.” This last comment must raise a fundamental question mark over the degree of support claimed for the Review document amongst the membership of the REC¹ and most especially amongst SACREs.

2-4 The legal framework for RE was set up in the 1944 Education Act with great care and wisdom, and one dispenses with the framework of this statute at one’s peril. As regards the RE in county/community schools, the act provided for the need for agreement on a syllabus of RE between 1/ Local Authority Representatives, 2/ Teachers/educational professionals, 3/ the Church of England as the established church, and 4/ the other main religious bodies. Each of these four groups had an equal say. The ensuing process is representative of the ‘Big Society’. It is inclusive, giving faith communities a genuine say, whilst acknowledging the needs of the wider society through the voice of Councillors, and the demands of teaching through the voice of teachers and educational professionals. One can only observe that the prescribed legal framework and process makes for genuine moderation and communal ownership.

2-5 Although the structure of four distinct committees is followed by all SACREs, regrettably this is not the structure adopted by the REC which seems to be designed to appear to speak for people of faith whilst keeping their influence in check through their place in the general

¹ See e.g. the claims on p. 12.

membership. The REC should have consulted faith communities and their leadership directly on the draft of the Non-statutory Curriculum Framework for RE and asked for CoE approval via the bishop directly responsible for educational matters (Rt. Rev. John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford).

2-6 The 1944 Act in addition to providing for a process determining the syllabus for RE in county/community schools, also gave teachers and pupils (via their parents) the freedom to withdraw from RE. Furthermore, the act provided for the creation of ‘voluntary aided’ schools and ‘voluntary controlled’ schools as effective measures by which faith communities could determine their own RE and educational ethos within the state sector of education. Now the RE Review is proposing that its proposed framework should be followed by faith schools too.

2-7 The RE Review quotes from the former schools minister, Nick Gibb, who made it evident that government policy “values the local determination of RE, which reflects the needs and traditions of the community, whether that is carried out by local authorities or schools.” The concentration on *defining a core curriculum* in the proposed NCFRE is not a way of helping local ASCs and schools but a way of telling them what they *must* do, even if NCFRE permits some variable extras. This is a fundamental effort at centralisation and against the desired course set by the political guidance.

2-8 Legally it is clear that humanism and secular philosophies are not properly included within religious education *except as critiques of religion*. They are properly included only as a means for clarifying and testing religious claims and insights, but they are not properly included *in their own right*². The ‘experts’ were certainly informed of this legal advice but they have simply chosen to ignore it by including Humanism and ‘worldviews’ generally in the curriculum starting with the recommended curriculum for Key Stage 1 (p. 18) (i.e. 5-7 year olds). This is despite the ‘official’ position of the CoE in the form of a statement made by the Bishop of Oxford, the Rt. Rev John Pritchard, that humanism should not be taught to children in its own right within RE.

² That was the core of the legal advice received by the City of Birmingham in 1974 and reaffirmed by further legal advice in 2009.

2-9 The review proposes teaching humanism and atheism by expanding the ‘religion’ in RE into ‘religion and belief’ or ‘religions and worldviews’³. The paragraph that speaks of the ‘Breadth of RE’ states:

The law requires that local authority RE agreed syllabuses and RE syllabuses used in academies that are not designated with a religious character ‘must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.’ This means that from the ages of 5 to 19 pupils in schools learn about diverse religions and worldviews including Christianity and the other principal religions. Some schools with a religious character will prioritise learning about and from one religion, but all types of school need to recognize the diversity of the UK and the importance of learning about its religions and worldviews, including those with a significant local presence. (p.15)

2-10 The second half of the paragraph interprets the law incorrectly. The phrase ‘religions and worldviews’ appears to be shorthand for ‘religions and secular/atheistic philosophies’. The clause in the law only specifies the UK’s principal religions and says nothing about requiring humanism or atheism to be taught. Secondly, as stated in the first sentence of the paragraph the legal clause refers to community schools and to academies *without a religious foundation*. To then go on to suggest that *all types of schools* should recognize ‘the importance of learning about religions and worldviews’ is at variance with the legal position. It would be wholly against the principles of voluntary schooling and academies with a religious foundation to insist they teach humanism and atheism. These schools must teach RE in accordance with their trust deeds⁴.

2-11 It is neither possible nor desirable in a free and open society to shelter children from secularity, agnosticism, atheism and humanism, nor is it feasible to do so since much of the curriculum already presupposes methodologies and intellectual enquiries *etsi deus non daretur* (as if God does not exist). What is at issue is whether such a methodology, or methodologies, should be used in RE and thus whether religions and secular worldviews are ultimately on a par. The latter (worldviews) are seen as human constructs which might differ from time to time like the duck-rabbit optical illusion - now you see the world one way and now another. Religions, on the other hand, present themselves in a very different way, perhaps as a truth to do or as a command to be obeyed. Schools with a religious foundation in

³ See e.g. footnotes 7, 8 and 9 on page 14 of the Review where this spelled out in full.

⁴ The caveat in a footnote on p. 7 hardly undoes the damage that this paragraph does to the rights in law given to the governors of voluntary aided schools and of academies and free schools.

particular will resist any attempt to diminish the *sui generis* character of religious interests and the way this informs religious education. Agreed Syllabus Conferences should do the same to conform to the law as it stands.

3. Purpose

3-1 Much was made in the initial stages of the review about the confusion surrounding the purpose and aims of RE. See para 1.2 of appendix 1 p. 49. It was claimed that ‘Some people don’t get it.’ The RE Review itself does little to bring about the clarity that is necessary.

3-2 The first, perhaps minor, mistake lies in indirectly quoting the law (1988 ERA) as to the fundamental aims of education as a whole (p. 12):

“Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life....”

In doing so, they omit the expectation in the law that the curriculum should also contribute to the development of *society* which is also mentioned in the ERA. This is important because there is still an all pervasive individualism in the Non statutory Curriculum Framework for RE that was so evident in the original NSNFRE of 2004 – though it is somewhat less pronounced. Thus one notes the intrusion of the word ‘own’ e.g. p. 18, p. 19, p. 20, p. 21 etc. When the document says that pupils “should raise questions and begin to express their own views ...” (p. 18, 21) the intrusion of the word ‘own’ suggests that it is not good enough for them simply to learn to express *their* views but that these views must somehow be set against those of others. This fails to recognise that we learn to articulate and express our views precisely in conjunction with, and through our relationships and in dialogue with, others. Not enough attention has been paid to the sociology of knowledge.

3-3 The most powerful argument that one can have for delivering religious education in school is that there is something intrinsically worthwhile about identifiable forms of religious life to which young people should be given access. Religious education cannot be done simply because the law requires it to be done but rather the law requires that it be done because many in society accept that these identifiable forms of religious life either have or may have this intrinsic merit. All education statute since 1944 in England up until the 2010 Academies Act have assumed that religious sensibilities might make this positive

contribution to the development of pupils and society hence the prescription of RE in contrast to systems in the US or France where religion is excluded from schools.. Young people without access to it would be impoverished spiritually, morally, socially and culturally speaking. It must, of course, be acknowledged that not everyone in society shares this judgment about religious life but religious educational processes cannot begin without it. The lack of universal agreement on this point is a good reason for maintaining the parental choice for pupil withdrawal clause in the law. But one must conclude that the purpose of RE is quite simple, namely, to enable religious sensibilities and religious life to contribute to the overarching aim of education. Religious traditions do so by articulating the nature and character of spiritual and moral life, and cultivating them through their acts of recollection of revelations, through their narratives, rituals, doctrines, social practices etc. that re-present or re-live the presence of God/transcendence. There can be no expectation that every religious tradition must be represented on the curriculum but whichever are selected, are selected because of the insight and contribution they might make to the educational enterprise in local and identifiable communities.

3-4 What the RE Review needs to make clear is how and in what ways, for example, that ‘knowing and understanding about a range of ‘religions and worldviews’ contributes to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and society. Sadly it does not do so in sufficient detail to be of much use.

3-5 To illustrate: What precisely is the connection between

‘...questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human’

and developing

‘an aptitude for dialogue’? They might as easily develop an aptitude for nihilism, cynicism, and relativism unless one can be more positive about the value of studying such matters.

3-6 In ‘enabling pupils to develop their ideas, values and identities’, can we be indifferent as to *which* ideas, values and identities are formed by individual pupils? It appears that the plural and secular context in which the RE Review is done silences the ‘experts’ about *how* a pupil might develop or *what* character and qualities ultimately lead to an open, cohesive, tolerant, and discursive society - even if they had such social development in mind. This is very different from the 2007 Birmingham Agreed Syllabus that spells out the relevant

dispositions and looks to religious traditions to show how they do, or might, contribute to developing these dispositions.

4. Pedagogy and Content

4-1 Part of the difficulty to be found in the NCFRE stems from the desire of the experts to provide a ‘core curriculum’ that will set the benchmarks for all RE syllabuses everywhere. However, a little reflection on the overarching aims of education would have shown that the ambition of defining a ‘core’ for RE is impossible. The aims, (which require the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum that leads to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and of society), can be met in a whole variety of ways. The very reason we live in a multi-cultural society is that there are diverse traditions with very different historical roots, and which have each, and separately, developed considerable spiritual and moral depth i.e. they have each used a different set of resources. To claim that there is one single core of teaching would be difficult to establish. To pretend that one must, however, know something about many or all religious traditions to attain spiritual depth is to pretend that all saints, prophets, gurus, apostles of an earlier age with little knowledge of the different traditions, were shallow in some important respect. It is conceivable that social and cultural depth in current circumstances requires some engagement with different traditions but to suppose there must be a single ‘core’ is not believable.

4-2 What is interesting is that the review has abandoned the two attainment targets of *learning about* and *learning from* widely used in earlier documents. This is replaced with the expectation “to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study” (P.15). The original distinction in attainment targets was introduced to make it self-evidently clear that RE was not just a matter of transmitting information about the different religious traditions but that pupils should be encouraged to engage with them. The original reason for the introduction of this ‘*learning from*’ attainment target was to counter the rather voyeuristic tendencies in much multi-faith RE. It was certainly evident to teachers that pupils tend to find material boring unless it is made relevant to their lives.

4-3 If RE is to contribute to the development of pupils as the overarching aims of education demands, one must specify what bearing these religious matters should have for their character and life. Perhaps the words ‘to apply and understand’ or ‘gaining and deploying

skills' in the NCFRE are expected to serve the function of *learning from*. Yet the advice to 'apply' without specifying to what purpose and in what ways, is all but useless advice. The generality makes it far from clear how it will actually contribute to the spiritual and moral development of pupils let alone to their social and cultural development. Does it need to be said that the sheer requirement to be clear and coherent does not ensure that the beliefs, ideas, values etc are worthy of a pupil's allegiance? Similarly, whether one should respect the right of others to differ as the Review claims, would also depend on what the views are. One cannot for example freely express racist views in public nor is there a requirement to respect the people, who do so, for holding such views.

4-4 The RE Review has replaced the abandoned two attainment targets with three aims.

'Know about and understand...'

'Express ideas and insights...'

'Gain and deploy skills....'

This is a puzzling trio. One could have thought that expressing ideas and insights was an intellectual *skill*, whether one did so 'reasonably' or unreasonably, with or without 'increasing discernment'. The second aim is not readily differentiated from the third, just as *expressing ideas* cannot be easily separated from the supposed skill of *articulating beliefs*. On the other hand it is difficult to see how 'knowing about and understanding' can be achieved or demonstrated separately from 'expressing ideas' or thoughts. The response may be that the three aims cannot in practice be separated from each other. But the difficulty is the degree of abstraction that ultimately provides no direction to pupils, despite the references to 'appreciating and appraising'. This is the point of this form of RE, it fails to guide and is directionless. There is no indication that the appreciation and appraisals made by teachers and by others in society are grounded.

4-5 There is a general failure in the Review's NCFRE to recognise the complexity of the human person as having not only thoughts and ideas but also as having feelings and dispositions to act. Human beings struggle not only to acquire a growth in knowledge but with developing empathy or with feeling rightly about matters. And not infrequently, human beings struggle to find *the will* to do things. Such distinctions could have given a characteristic identity to the different aims and provided a kind of rationale that the current collection simply lacks. The aims would also have had more pedagogical force, for without

the recognition of knowledge, feelings and human will and an acknowledgement of the communal nature of our existence, there can be no effective educational communication.

4-6 One does not gain any sense from the document that for the writers of the report, religious sensibility is of paramount importance to the development of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of pupils. At best it is the experience of a secular RE that is supposed to be of benefit to pupils. Perhaps the RE community needs to review the way in which it presents its case and describe the tasks of RE. If they are unsure of the value of religious life itself why should anyone else care?

5. Politics and the wider context

5-1 The RE Review is on much stronger grounds in identifying some of the practicalities that are affecting the delivery of RE in schools. The development of an E-Bacc (English Baccalaureat) without any mention of RE as a legally prescribed subject was bound to have a negative impact. Just as the disappearance of RE advisors and advisory teachers impoverishes the resources on which schools may draw to support the delivery of RE in the classroom. The reliance on teachers without an educational background in theology weakens the subject. Connect this fact with the withdrawal of support for the training of RE teachers and it begins to create a picture of a political indifference to RE in schools.

5-2 The (political) indifference may well be shared by Faith communities because they have been supplanted by those with a professional interest in education. Faith communities which have examined the secularised RE on offer no longer see RE as serving religious life in any positive way. Only an RE that is expressly and openly committed to serving the spiritual and moral development of young people using religious resources, can be of interest to faith communities.

5-3 What the RE Review fails to do is to ask why the indifference to RE exists. No doubt the secularisation of society has something to with it, but then the 'RE community' has directly contributed to this by insisting that in RE one must 'study' and 'understand religion as a phenomenon', effectively from a secular perspective. Phenomena may, or may not, be interesting. Whether they are interesting will depend on whether the phenomena convey moral commands, present something beautiful that is worthy of contemplation, or reveal truths that need to be acknowledged and affirmed. So long as the RE community seeks to be

neutral and value free, so long as they exclude the passions of faith and keep faith communities at bay, they will have little of value to contribute to social life and will consequently be treated with indifference by politicians.

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
9th July 2014
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People**

Applications for variation of practice

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider any applications for variation of practice to religious education and or collective worship.

2 Summary

- 2.1 Upon receipt of a written application from a Headteacher of a county school SACRE should determine whether it is appropriate to disapply the requirement for broadly Christian collective worship and/or make amendments to the way the Agreed Syllabus is followed in the case of that school.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 That members of SACRE are updated on any new developments in this area.

4 Background

- 4.1 No applications have been received at this time.

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 There are no immediate financial implications

Contact Officer

Emma Jardine

Telephone number:

01785 277997

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
9th July 2014
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People

SACRE Budget 2014 - 2015

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To advise members of SACRE of the current budget position

2 Summary

2.1 A breakdown of the SACRE budget for the financial year 2013 - 2014 to date will be presented at the meeting.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the report

4 Background

4.1 A budget has been made available to support the work of SACRE during the financial year 2014 – 2015 as approved by the Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning).

4.2 The budget will be monitored strictly this year in terms of the number of days that the RE consultant is permitted to support the SACRE. This is required to reflect the funding.

4.3 There are many items that will remain unchanged. The extras will no longer be funded by Entrust. The SACRE lecture will be funded for this academic year as it has already been advertised. The SACRE awards could be presented in schools by SACRE members or alternatively could be distributed at the SACRE lecture for this year.

4.4 No money will be made available by Entrust to support the agreed syllabus review outside of the allocated budget. SACRE members may decide that the RE consultant can use some time allocated against other work on the agreed syllabus work instead.

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 are indicated in the budget account.

Contact Officer
Telephone number:

Emma Jardine
01785 27799

NB Consultant days are charged at £575 full day and £300 half day

	Days	Income from EM1100 £12030
SACRE non negotiables		
Annual Membership of NASACRE		95
Annual Membership of AREIAC		70
Membership of NATRE		100
Attendance at NASACRE AGM (Chair of SACRE)		90
Attendance at AREIAC 1 day conference (Consultant to SACRE) Fee:		90
Consultant time to attend conference	1	575
Total	1	1020
Minimum Required Consultant Support for SACRE		
3xhalf day meetings including prep time	3	1725
Monitoring RE provision including creating, distributing and collating surveys	1	575
Liaison with Chair/Clerk	1	575
Budget		
Annual report	4	2300
Printing and distribution of annual report		878
Strategic information and advice via phone/email to schools	3	1725
Admin and research		
Responding to SACRE instructions data/praise	0.5	300
	2	1150
Familiarisation and Liaison with related organisations e.g. NATRE, AREIAC, NASACRE	3	1725
Total	18.5	11973
SACRE Extras currently supported by consultant to SACRE/Entrust		
refreshments at meetings x3		81
Annual SACRE Lecture (1xspeaker £500, half day consultant time £300, refreshments £27)	0.5	875
student conference/consultation (1day+2 days prep)	3	1725
Annual SACRE Awards (2 days consultant prep time, half day consultant time for awards ceremony, refreshments £50)	2.5	1450
Total	24.5	16104
Additional Statutory SACRE duties		
Agreed Syllabus Review once every 5 years . The 2014 review has been agreed by Cllr Adams and has found that a full rewrite would be advisable due to far reaching education changes in the past 5 years. This work takes 12 months, involves stakeholder consultations at all key points and requires the creation of educational materials from reception to post 16. The additional support of an external body is required		
RE consultant to SACRE	20	11500
Consultant from RE Today	20	10000
Total	64.5	37604

Minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on 12 February 2014

Present:

Sonia Andjelkovic
Sue Blackmore
Diana Cutler
Peter Davies
Jane Essex
Terry Finn
Dr Laow

Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Liz O'Brien
Muhammad Parekh
Sam Phillips
Liz Williams
Rosemary Woodward
Caroline Wood

Also in attendance: Emma Jardine and Helen Phillips

Apologies: Tricia Budd, Christine Chadwick, Mick Dwyer, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Ann Hewetson, Colin Hopkins, Paul Lewis, Barrie Scott, Conor Wileman and David Williams

PART ONE

1. Agreed Syllabus Conference

The Education Act 1993 required the Local Authority (LA) to institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus every five years after the completion of its last review. The last revision of the Agreed Syllabus had been issued to schools in 2009 and at their meeting of 13 November 2013 SACRE resolved to write to the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, highlighting the need for a review and seeking approval to set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to undertake this review.

SACRE had previously received a copy of this correspondence and the Cabinet Member's approval to convene the ASC.

Members had noted the high regard that the original Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus had. This had been produced in 1992/93, largely led by Paul Bellingham, and had remained in tact with slight adjustments for over twenty years, a testament to its quality.

Since the last syllabus revision in 2009 there had been a number of major changes in education which had a direct impact on Religious Education (RE). These included:

- a) from September 2013 a new curriculum would be introduced to all schools (Key Stages (KS) 1-4) with a clear focus on slimming down the curriculum to allow for more cross curriculum dimensions and inter-disciplinary studies and the removal of levels of attainment. RE needed to take account of these changes in order to play a full and active role in the new curriculum;
- b) in 2012 the REC completed a review of the current National Non-Statutory Framework for RE.

The Conference considered the level of review they wished to undertake and the cost implications. If undertaking a more radical review Members wished to ensure the syllabus had the flexibility to be purchased and used by other authorities whilst being

pertinent to Staffordshire. It was understood that Staffordshire teachers would welcome a syllabus that included more supportive materials to help support their teaching and work planning. This was particularly important for the non RE specialist teaches of RE.

If a more radical review was to be undertaken it would be necessary to have officer time and support to carry out the work needed. Lat Blaylock (a well respected expert in RE and part of the RE Today team) had been approached to give an estimate of cost and process should the Conference choose to use his expertise in reviewing the Staffordshire syllabus. Lat had a successful background in this field.

The funding required for this review would be between £15,000 and £20,000 in total. Whilst the SACRE budget could fund part of this there would be a significant shortfall and it was suggested that the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, be approached in the first instance. A business case would then be produced for Entrust for any further funding required.

The Conference agreed that Rev Preb Michael Metcalf, Chairman of the Staffordshire SACRE and current Chairman of the ASC, should write to the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, setting out the Conference thoughts on undertaking a more radical syllabus review and seeking possible funding for this work.

RESOLVED – That the Chairman write to the cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, on behalf of the ASC, setting out their wish for a more radical review of the Syllabus and seeking funding for this work.

Chairman

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
9th July 2014
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People
Agreed Syllabus Review 2014

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To set in motion the process to review the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

2 Summary

2.1 The Education Act 1993 requires the Local Authority to institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus every five years after the completion of its last review.

2.2 The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus was last reviewed and issued to school in 2009. A review therefore falls due in 2014.

2.3 It is for the Local Authority to convene an agreed syllabus conference for the purpose of reviewing a syllabus. However the SACRE can, in writing, request that the LA reconsider its agreed syllabus.

3 Recommendation

3.1 This is the second meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference. At the previous meeting members decided to formally begin the Agreed Syllabus review process with the support of Cllr. Adams.

3.2 Members also began the process of sourcing funding for a radical review of the Agreed Syllabus. This included letters and meetings. Entrust will be unable to fund any Agreed Syllabus review. The Chair of SACRE will update on responses from Staffordshire County Council. .

3.3 The Agreed Syllabus Conference may wish to discuss ways forward and a possible rethink of the type of review process available to them at this time.

4 Background

4.1 The last revision of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus was issued to schools in 2009.

4.2 Since the revision a number of major changes have taken place in education which have a direct impact on religious education:

- From September 2013 a new curriculum will be introduced to all schools (Key Stages 1-4), with a clear focus on slimming down the curriculum to allow for more cross curriculum dimensions and inter-disciplinary studies and the removal of levels of attainment. Religious education needs to take account of these changes on order to play a full and active role in the new curriculum.
- In 2012 the REC completed a review of the current National Non-Statutory Framework for Religious Education. This is the document that SACRE's must take account of and is referred to in all national documentation relating to RE, including examination syllabuses and the SACRE self-evaluation materials produced by Ofsted.

4.3 It was originally proposed that should any revisions be required the revised Staffordshire agreed syllabus should be in place for September 2014 in order to make best use of the momentum generated by the implementation of the changes in the curriculum. In reality, however, the review process is a 12 month process from start to finish.

4.4 SACRE has a number of options available to it. SACRE may choose to make radical changes to the syllabus. SACRE may choose to make small changes to the syllabus. SACRE may choose to make no changes to the syllabus. What follows is a proposal for potential radical change.

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 Expenses incurred will be met from the SACRE budget.

Contact Officer
Telephone number:

Emma Jardine
01785 27799

Mr Ben Adams,
Cabinet Member,
Learning and Skills

DX 712320 Stafford 5

Fax No. (01785) 276178

Please ask for: Helen Phillips

Telephone: (01785) 276143

e-mail: Helen.phillips@staffordshire.gov.uk

My Ref:

Date: 18 November 2013

Dear Mr Adams,

As you will be aware the Education Act 1993 requires the Local Authority (LA) to institute a review of its locally agreed religious education syllabus every five years. The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus was last reviewed and issued to schools in 2009, meaning that the next review falls in 2014.

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), at their meeting of 13 November 2013, agreed to raise the need for a review with you, seeking your approval to set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to undertake the review.

An ASC is a separate entity to the SACRE but has the same committee structure and can be made up of the SACRE members, although there is no provision for co-opted members.

The Staffordshire SACRE are aware of a number of current issues that will have an influence on the Review, including the recent publication of the National Non-Statutory Framework for RE.

On behalf of the SACRE I would be grateful if you would confirm whether you wish them to convene an ASC to undertake the required review.

Yours sincerely,

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
9th July 2014**

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People

Implications from 'Trojan Horse' investigations in Birmingham

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present members of SACRE with an opportunity to discuss implications from 'Trojan Horse' investigations in Birmingham

2 Summary

2.1 SACRE's are invited to hear the update and consider responses

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE hear the update and note the contents

4 Background

4.1 In June 2014 Ofsted published its findings from the 'Trojan Horse' plot which alleged a socially-conservative sect of Muslims was trying to get their own members on to governing bodies and oust head teachers in Birmingham schools. This has been a high profile case. A balanced response will come from members of the RE community in July.

4.2 Whilst Staffordshire schools were not involved, SACRE members might want to support their schools in their work promoting good community relations and understanding. The engaging with faith communities website (www.ewfc.co.uk) could be publicised for our schools to make use of.

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
Telephone number:

Emma Jardine
01785 277997

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
9th July 2014

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of People

20+ ideas for SACRE to consider

1 Purpose of Report

To present SACRE members with a selection of good ideas, some of which they may wish to Adopt.

2 Summary

As the 2014 AGM conference drew to a close, Lesley Prior read out a list of ideas which SACREs might consider in their meetings:.

3 Recommendation

That members of SACRE receive the ideas.

That members use this as an opportunity to reflect on good practice.

4 Background

It is good practice for SACRE's to self review. This is reported on annually in the annual Report.

5 Equal Opportunities

This report has been prepared in line with the County Council's policy on Equal Opportunities.

6 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications

Contact Officer: Emma Jardine
Telephone Number 01785 277997

1. Contact your local MP and encourage membership of the APPG
2. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) recently passed a resolution that the union should be properly represented on all SACREs so delegates are encouraged to lobby other unions. Members of the NASUWT executive are also taking this forward
3. Engage with initial teacher training (ITT) providers and get some of them involved in SACRE or presenting to a meeting
4. Engage with the media locally and nationally and with social media to counter wider public ignorance
5. Encourage schools to sign up for the RE Quality Mark (REQM)
6. Think about who is in charge of academy chains and free schools in your area. Teachers from these schools can be included as representatives in Group C of SACREs
7. Get your local authority scrutiny committee to engage with the Annual SACRE Report
8. Develop youth SACREs and encourage young people's contributions
9. Hold SACRE meetings in schools and include a training session for teachers
10. Report schools which do not include RE or do it properly to the local authority
11. Make links with post 16 RE
12. Develop a resource collection for loan to schools
13. Have a sub-committee to support and deliver collective worship in schools
14. Sponsor competitions eg artwork for inclusion in the annual report
15. Work to support faith group visitors into schools
16. Develop a young ambassadors project
17. Engage governors. The information included in pages 40-41 of the Governors Handbook about RE is not clear and NASACRE might submit a rewrite. Rotate chairmanship through the four groups of SACRE
18. Engage teachers in working parties when developing a locally agreed syllabus. Process is important not just the end product and this involves and develops teachers
19. Find out if there are any subject leaders of education (SLEs) you could work with. You can find out from the National College website if there are any RE SLEs in your areas
20. Ensure whatever you do has a positive impact on teaching and learning in classrooms.