

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday, 6 July 2016

2.00 pm

Kingston Centre, Fairway, Stafford ST16 3TW

John Tradewell
Director of Strategy, Governance and Change
28 June 2016

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies**
2. **Welcome to New Members**
3. **Declaration of Any other Business**
4. **Minutes of the SACRE Meeting held on 10 February 2016** (Pages 1 - 4)
5. **Update on Key Issues** (Pages 5 - 8)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities
6. **NASACRE Update** (Pages 9 - 10)

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7. **Monitoring Provision Survey** (Pages 11 - 12)

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8. **Correspondence from the BHA** (Pages 13 - 24)



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9. **Application for Variation of Practice** (Pages 25 - 26)

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10. **SACRE Budget** (Pages 27 - 28)

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11. **Publications for SACRE to Consider** (Pages 29 - 38)

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

12. **AOB**

13. **Date of next meeting**

The next SACRE meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 9 November 2016, 2.00pm, Kingston Centre, Stafford.

Membership

Margaret Crossland	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf (Chairman)
Paul Moseley	Dr Laow Panyasiri
Sam Kirwan	Muhammad Parekh
Julie Thompson (Co-Optee)	Sam Phillips
Susan Devereux	Sue Blackmore
Mick Dwyer	Colin Hopkins
Sonia Andjelkovic	Rosemary Woodward
Ann Hewetson	Peter Davies
Diana Cutler	Terry Finn
Tajinder Singh	David Williams
Paul Lewis	Caroline Wood
G Devadason	Ian Lawson
Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal (Vice-Chairman)	

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 10 February 2016

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

Margaret Crossland, Sam Kirwan, Julie Thompson (Co-Optee), Susan Devereux, Sonia Andjelkovic, Diana Cutler, Muhammad Parekh, Sue Blackmore, Rosemary Woodward, Peter Davies, Terry Finn, David Williams, Caroline Wood and Ian Lawson

Apologies for absence: Paul Moseley, Mick Dwyer, Dr Laow Panyasiri, Sam Phillips, Colin Hopkins and Mrs J Grundy

Also in attendance - Helen Phillips and Mary Gale

PART ONE

26. Minutes of the SACRE Meeting held on 11 November 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 11 November 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

27. An Update on Key Issues

The SACRE received an update on key issues that had occurred since their last meeting, including:

- a) an update on maternity cover for the RE Consultant, with Mary Gale continuing to cover this varied work, and Emma Jardine expected to return in April;
- b) changes to GCSE regulations, with pupils commencing their GCSEs from September 2016 being assessed on a scale of 1-9. Concern was shared at the delay in Ofcom approving the new RE exam syllabus for each exam board and the impact this would have on schools nationally;
- c) queries concerning the Agreed Syllabus, specifically that it is past its review date. Schools have been advised to continue using the old syllabus for now;
- d) a number of important reports have been published recently. These are addressed later on the agenda; and
- e) the SACRE Annual Report has been completed and had been sent out to schools via the electronic school bag or “ebag”.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be received.

28. Agreed Syllabus Conference Review Update

SACRE noted the work that had been undertaken since their November 2015 meeting in relation to re-writing the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus and the discussions of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held prior to the start of this SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED – That the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference be noted.

29. Analysis of Examination Results

SACRE received a statistical analysis of the standards achieved in GCSE (full course), Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies by pupils examined in the summer of 2015. Overall the number of entries for GCSE full course had risen. There were now 2441 more entries for the full GCSE course than in 2012. Schools should no longer be entering pupils for the GCSE short course, reflecting the changes nationally in the examination system's move away from short courses.

The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus recommended that students at KS4 should study an approved examination syllabus and these findings showed that the vast majority of schools complied with this. Standards at GCSE had declined slightly, reflecting the national picture.

Overall 445 students across 27 schools had been entered for AS level and 333 Students across 25 schools had been entered for A level at the end of Key Stage 5. This reflects a substantial increase at both AS and A level.

SACRE requested that letters of congratulations be sent to those schools entering a more than 50% of their pupils in GCSE RE examination courses who achieved above the national average results for those achieving A*-C grades. Letters should also be sent to those high achieving schools at A and AS level.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) The report be received; and
- b) Letters of congratulations be sent to the specific schools identified by SACRE.

30. Recommendations of Recent Publications as advised by NASACRE

In 2015 a number of significant reports were published in connection with religious education, collective worship, SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences. SACRE received information compiled by David Hampshire, Chairman of NASACRE, which brought together proposals from these reports and outlined the judgement of Mr Justice Warby in relation to the Secretary of State's position regarding non-religious worldviews as part of GCSE Religious Studies.

SACRE received information on:

- a) "A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools" – report (previously discussed at SACRE) of Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead;
- b) "Living with Difference: community, diversity and the common good" – report of the Woolf Institute/ Rt Hon Baroness Butler-Sloss;
- c) "RE for Real" project – developed at Goldsmith's, University of London, under the supervision of Professor Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw;
- d) "Will GCSE Religious Studies as proposed by the Government, meet the requirements to religiously educate pupils at KS4?" The Judicial Review of Mr Justice Warby; and
- e) C) NASACRE's response "Common Themes: uncommon Solutions".

This was an exciting time for RE and Members were encouraged to explore the NASACRE website where details of these publications were available.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations outlined in these reports be noted.

31. Application for Membership of SACRE from the Spiritualists' National Union

SACRE had received a request from representatives of the Spiritualists National Union to become a SACRE member. Prior to the start of this SACRE meeting Mrs Julia Almond had spoken to SACRE Members about Spiritualism today and answered their questions.

SACRE now considered offering the opportunity for a Spiritualist representative to have a co-opted place on SACRE. They discussed this proposal within their individual committees and then formally voted on whether they wished to co-opt a member of the National Spiritualist Union onto SACRE. Each Committee voted in favour of the proposal and the SACRE will therefore seek endorsement for the proposal from the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills.

RESOLVED – That SACRE seek endorsement from the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, to offer a co-opted place on the Staffordshire SACRE to the Spiritualist National Union.

32. NASACRE Update

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

- The NASACRE AGM and Conference was scheduled for 17 May. Adam Denham from Goldsmiths and Baroness Butler-Sloss were guest speakers at the event, with Nicky Morgan also likely to attend. The event was to be held in Central Hall, Westminster; and,
- Charles Clarke had agreed to become NASACRE's patron.

RESOLVED – That the oral update by the Chairman be received.

33. Application for Variation of Practice

There were none on this occasion.

34. SACRE Budget

SACRE received a breakdown of the current SACRE budget for the financial year 2015-16. The remaining monies would be used for consultancy work on the Agreed Syllabus.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

35. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – That the next SACRE meeting is held on 6 July 2016, 2.00pm, Kingston Centre, Stafford.

**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
6th July 2016
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families & Communities

An Update on Key Issues

1 Purpose of Report

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

2 Summary

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

3 Recommendation

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

4 Background

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

4.2 Members will be briefed on these key developments.

5 Equal Opportunities

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

6 Financial implications

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

Contact Officers

Emma Jardine-Phillips 07805692573

Mary Gale 07816374873

Key Issues

Cover for RE Consultant to Staffordshire SACRE

Maternity cover for Emma Jardine ended in May 2016. Emma was welcomed back to Entrust.

She has been busy catching up on the latest news in RE, supporting the development of RE by writing a newsletter and organising courses and updates. In addition, she has been supporting and writing the Agreed Syllabus.

Changes to the GCSE regulations

Changes to the GCSE regulations. In summary from September 2016 pupils who commence their GCSE studies will be assessed on a scale of 1-9.

Examination boards such as AQA and OCR have produced draft information on what would be covered in their examinations. Most of these draft qualification have now been accredited by Ofqual. They have been published to enable teachers to have sight of the proposed approach to GCSE (9–1) in Religious Studies.

	AQA	OCR	Edexcel	WJEC
Religious studies	Spec A: ✓	Spec: ✓	Spec A: 4th submission received 2 June 2016	Spec: ✓
	Spec B: ✓	Spec 'SC': ✓	Spec B: 4th submission received 2 June 2016	Spec 'SC': ✓
	Spec 'SC': ✓		Spec 'SC A': 4th submission received 6 June 2016 Spec 'SC B': 3rd 4th submission received 6 June 2016	

Queries about the Staffordshire AS

I have been answering a number of queries about the AS. I have re-assured schools that there is no problem with them continuing to teach the current AS and this would continue to be the case until the new AS is published.

Assessment queries have been numerous as currently we are experiencing a life without levels and previous general guidance has been to assess using levels. Again schools have been reassured and to reflect on what would best suits the learning needs of the pupils.

Attendance at the NASACRE conference in London

See Agenda Item 5.

NATRE meetings

These local meetings held at St Dominic's in Brewood and hosted by Sam Kirwan have proved useful in ensuring that those who attend are kept up to date with current issues in Religious Education. The most recent meeting was held on 15th June 2016. Items for discussion and information centred around the Lichfield Cathedral outreach resources such as the "Inspire " project, the support of the MEAS team, updated on REQM, update on future conferences, update on resources from NATRE, examination syllabus and the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus. The next meeting will be held at St Dominics Brewood on November 16th 2016.

AREIAC meetings

These meetings held in Birmingham at the RE Today offices and hosted by RE today representtaives and Dilwyn Hunt have proved useful in ensuring that those who attend are kept up to date with current issues in Religious Education including issues surrounding assessment in RE, examination update, REQM issues and useful resources to aid the teaching of RE. The most recent meeting was 20th June 2016 which Emma Jardine Phillips and Mary Gale attended. Mary Gale is now the **AREIAC** West Midlands representative.

RE Quality Mark

Mary has successfully supported a school in Stoke on Trent in gaining a Silver Mark award. These awards are few and far between in our locality. St Dominc's Brewood under the leadership of Sam Kirwan hopes to apply in Autumn 2016.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
6th July 2016
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities

An update on 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, including the annual conference that was held in London on May 17th 2016. 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.

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 Officers:

Emma Jardine-Phillips **07805692573**

Mary Gale **07816374873**

Conference report

This conference was held at Westminster Central Hall in an atmosphere of convivial discourse and debate. Michael Metcalf and Mary Gale attended on behalf of Staffordshire SACRE. The key note speakers were as follows:-

The **Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE**, formerly President of the Family Division of the High Court was the first female Lord Justice of Appeal and until 2004, was the highest-ranking female judge in the United Kingdom. She has chaired many high profile enquiries and inquests. Baroness Butler-Sloss served as Chair for the recently published Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life: **Living with Difference**. (December 2015)

This publication looks at religion in a wider context than just educational,- covering areas such as the media and law but also has strong messages for the teaching community. It states that "*education about religion and belief is essential because it is in schools and colleges that we have the best and earliest chance of breaking down ignorance and developing individuals who will be receptive of the other and ask difficult questions without fear of offending*" Page 38.

Professor Adam Dinham is Professor of Faith and Public Policy at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is also Chair of the British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group (Socrel), Professor of Religious Literacy, Diakonhemmet University College, Oslo, Norway and Honorary Stephenson Professor of Leadership, Religion & Society, Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies, Sheffield University, UK. With Martha Shaw, Professor Dinham is the co-author of **RE for REal: The future of teaching and learning about belief**. This report looks at the future of teaching and learning about religion and belief, focusing on knowledge and skills that school leavers must have to engage effectively with religion and belief in schools, communities future work places and other contexts.

Both of the above speakers were accomplished in their delivery of their messages to the audience at the conference. Both reports make a number of recommendations for education and there are a number of similarities. Question time after each of the key note speeches generated debate about the future of RE in general.

SCARE members were asked during discussion time to reflect on the recommendations and comment on whether they agreed with them.

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Communities

Monitoring of Provision Survey

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present members of SACRE with an update on how the monitoring provision survey will be utilised in 2016.

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE will receive a brief report on how the survey will be utilised this year. These are matters on which it is appropriate to brief members of SACRE. The questions will be the same as in previous years with the addition of one extra question at the start regarding requesting schools to record when RE provision was last reviewed formally at school.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the report.

4 Background

4.1 All monitoring will take place via Survey Monkey. All Staffordshire schools will be invited to respond to SACRE monitoring surveys via email and the E Newsletter in Summer term 2016. The report will be available in Autumn 2016.

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 officers

Emma Jardine-Phillips 07805692573

Mary Gale 07816374873

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6th July 2016
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Communities

BHA representative correspondence regarding the Agreed Syllabus and response.

BHA correspondence regarding RE and response from NASACRE and AREIAC.

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To raise awareness amongst SACRE members of correspondence and responses from the BHA and DfE. In addition to raise awareness of correspondence from Paul Moseley to Staffordshire SACRE about the AS and the response from the SACRE chair.

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE will have the opportunity to read and comment on the above correspondence.

3 Recommendation

That members of SACRE read the correspondence and the responses to the communication from the BHA representative correspondence regarding the Agreed Syllabus and the chairs response. To read the BHA correspondence regarding RE and responses from NASACRE and AREIAC and the DfE.

4 Background

4.1 Communication from Paul Moseley the BHA representative on Staffordshire SACRE in response to the draft agreed syllabus and the response from our SACRE chair.

4.2 Communication from the BHA re Humanism in Religious Education-legal guidance.

NASACRE and others have asked the Department for Education to comment on the legal guidance. There are references to Dr. Satvinder Juss's advice and responses from the DfE

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 officers

Emma Jardine-Phillips 07805692573

Mary Gale 07816374873

Letter from Paul Moseley to Staffordshire SACRE 10/06/16

Dear SACRE,

This is a well structured and worded document that places religion clearly into an area for study and understanding. I applaud the framing of the topic and wish to support the robustness that this document requires so that there is a clear and coherent infrastructure in which teachers may explore this wonderful subject.

Equally, would be very interested supporting the development of teaching guidance/materials, being an educationalist, as well as providing any useful feedback regarding Right to Withdraw, something that I feel leads to a missed opportunity by those parents that choose to do so.

If I may ask for an area of discussion, it would be in just one particular example of phrasing.

"The religious dimension gives greater breadth and depth to that which is personal, spiritual, social and moral and this should be recognised in any form of combined or integrated course."

Might it be understandable to alter this from an absolute to a conditional phrase, whilst still retaining the intention and capacity of religion to provide these qualities? Otherwise it appears important to qualify what it is greater than, in comparison. There is also a quantifier needed in terms of the reference "breadth and depth" is in relation to. My fear otherwise is that this statement does not give schools and teachers an accurately framed positional statement from the syllabus authors.

For illustration I provide the following example for your consideration.

"The religious dimension can provide a breadth and depth of meaning for believers which is personal, spiritual, social and moral and this should be recognised in any form of combined or integrated course."

Finally, for clarity, I wonder if we could qualify the following statement?

"In following a course of Religious Education, each learner will be considering beliefs, acquiring social skill sand forming moral judgements in addition to developing their own moral values."

Is RE for the understanding of religious diversity and the foundations and cultural expression for each perspective, or is the syllabus striving to take responsibility, perhaps only in part, for the moral development of students? If it is the latter, would you agree there is need to include critical thinking and logic within this remit so that students have a sound basis for moral

considerations? Otherwise, what is the pedagogical framework in which this study sits and should this be cited for clarity?

In essence my questions above is to resolve the dichotomy within the text of the document if the syllabus aims to provide a framework for the study of, or, provide a commentary on, religious perspectives. I feel this is a crucial framing point for schools to recognise their role and how to deliver the syllabus as intended.

If any of my thoughts give rise to any discussion, please consider me available to further explore and/or clarify any points I have raised.

with regards **Paul Moseley.**

Reply to this letter from SACRE chair. 13/06/16

Dear Paul,

Many thanks for your letter circulated to members of Staffordshire SACRE. We are currently in the final stages of shaping up the proposed new Agreed Syllabus in preparation for the meeting on July 6th, and we will certainly take into account your suggestions about re-phrasing some of the existing text. It is important that the language of the Syllabus should be inclusive, balanced, and fair.

You raise some pertinent questions about the purpose of Religious Education, in relation to the ethical dimension in the proposed Agreed Syllabus. Historically, RE has always included the study of moral teachings, in Judaeo-Christianity alone in the distant past, and in other faiths and in secular stances as well more recently. Indeed, we would expect anyone who was "religiously literate" to be aware that religions carry a moral tradition with them, as part of "the package". If we are honest, we would also accept that part of the original role of RE was to inculcate in pupils the ethical values and behaviours taught by Judaeo-Christian morality.

Agreed Syllabus RE no longer has such a "confessional" nature. Pupils now habitually study a variety of ethical teachings in RE, and engage with a wide range of current ethical issues and dilemmas in the light of the ethical traditions they are studying. This aspect of RE has proved very popular with the pupils themselves. Indeed, so many pupils were choosing to take the "Philosophy and Ethics" options in GCSE courses in RE, that it was felt that too little attention was being paid to religion itself, and new guidelines have had to be introduced.

In the proposed new Syllabus, we are deliberately setting out to encourage pupils to grapple with the ethical issues raised by their living alongside people who may be different from them in terms of faith or life stance. In simple words, how can we all live together peaceably and constructively and inclusively? What attitudes and values would help to promote this, and what would obstruct it? Among other outcomes, RE aims generally to train pupils in such skills as critical thinking and logic. We are looking here to give pupils some distinctive tools with which to cope with the particular and quite personal moral challenges of living with diversity.

We are planning to have the final draft Agreed Syllabus ready to be sent out in advance of the meeting on July 6th, and I would welcome any further comments you might wish to make on that draft.

With every good wish,

Michael Metcalf

Rev. Prebendary Michael Metcalf Chair, Staffordshire SACRE

Letter sent to SACRE by Andrew Copson in the name of the BHA, citing the advice of Dr.Satvinder Juss.

Dear Helen,

In November 2015 the High Court ruled against the Department for Education in an important legal case which clarified the law on RE. It made clear that humanism should be studied in the subject and we at the BHA have received requests for help and assistance from a number of schools and teachers thinking ahead to their curriculum planning for September 2016.

Many RE syllabuses already recognise the value and importance of teaching about non-religious worldviews like humanism in RE, but many are unaware of the resources that the BHA provides free of any charge, from trained school speakers to lesson plans. With that in mind, I wanted to point you in the direction of understandinghumanism.org.uk <<https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/plugins/civCRM/civCRM/extern/url.php?u=7556&qid=587765>> where all these resources can be found, and I am also attaching a short briefing from Professor Satvinder Juss, prepared with the lawyers who won the case in November, setting out the law as clarified by the court.

I hope this will help you in your work. At the BHA, we recognise the potential difficulties that arise because the High Court ruling is not being implemented at a national level and the burdens that may put on LAs, SACREs, and schools. We are here to help in any way we can, so please do get in touch if you'd like any more information.

At the request of a number of teachers and SACREs, we will also be preparing resources on humanism that will be specifically designed to accompany each of the GCSE specifications to be taught from September 2016. I will let you know when these are published.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Copson

Chief Executive, British Humanist Association

Attachment referenced above. High Court ruling on Religious Education

Legal guidance on what it means for local authorities, academies, schools, teachers, Agreed Syllabus Conferences, and SACREs

Dr Satvinder Juss Professor of Law King's College London

Summary and background

1. A ruling by the High Court in November 2015 in a case brought by three families against the Department for Education has extensive implications for the way religious education is taught in schools without a religious character. This legal note is intended to help local authorities, academies, schools, teachers, Agreed Syllabus Conferences, and SACREs understand the law as set out in the judgement and their duties in relation to it. It has been prepared with input from the lawyers who won the case.

2. The High Court ruled ¹ that the Department for Education had made ‘an error of law’ in its specification of content for the new GCSE Religious Studies (RS) for English schools. ² The error was in asserting that teaching the new RS GCSE would meet the legal requirements for the provision of Religious Education (RE) in general, and the consequent implication that it could therefore be used by schools as the entirety of their RE teaching at Key Stage 4.

3. The High Court said this assertion was unlawful because statutory RE in schools without a religious character must be ‘objective, critical and pluralistic’ and a syllabus that covered religions in detail but did not give pupils the opportunity to learn similarly about a non-religious worldview such as Humanism would not meet this requirement. As the judgement states:

‘the state has a duty to take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in a pluralistic manner... the state must accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious beliefs; it is not entitled to discriminate between religions and beliefs on a qualitative basis; its duties must be performed from a standpoint of neutrality and impartiality as regards the quality and validity of parents’ convictions.’ (Paragraph 39)

4. In what follows we explain what the implications of this clarification of the law are for those who set RE syllabuses and/or teach RE.

What does this mean for RE at Key Stage 4?

5. The Court said the Government’s claim that the RS GCSE could form the entirety of a Key Stage 4 RE course was ‘false and misleading’ and would encourage others to act unlawfully ³. This was because such a syllabus might not include non-religious worldviews

1. R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education [2015]: <https://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/r-fox-v-ssfe.pdf>

2. The Religious Studies GCSE Subject Content, February 2015: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/403357/GCSE_RS_final_120215.pdf

3. Paragraph 81.

to the extent required under the law for RE as a whole to be neutral, impartial, and pluralistic. It would not even be adequate to balance the GCSE with teaching about non-religious beliefs in earlier key stages. The judge said:

‘...it is obvious that GCSE is a vitally important stage in the development of a young person’s character and understanding of the world. I do not consider it could be said that a complete or almost total failure to provide information about non-religious beliefs at this stage could be made up for by instruction given at earlier stages.’ (Paragraph 78)

6. The Government was required by the judge to clarify that using the RS GCSE as the entirety of the key stage 4 RE course might not be enough to fulfil the statutory requirements for RE. It has now done this. Technically this would mean that schools would have to provide additional teaching on non-religious worldviews alongside the GCSE course in order to meet those statutory requirements (see paragraph 8.d. below).’

What does it mean for RE syllabuses and teaching more generally?

7. As a statement of the current law, the judgement has significant implications for RE syllabuses in schools without a religious character:

a. RE syllabuses remain bound by the statutory requirement set out in the Education Act 1996 that they ‘reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practice of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain’. However, the phrase ‘principal religions’ now has to be read as including non-religious worldviews and includes Humanism.⁴

b. The legal requirement for RE to be ‘objective, critical and pluralistic’⁵ in line with the state’s ‘duty of impartiality and neutrality’ means that non-religious worldviews cannot be excluded but it does not mean that strict ‘equal air-time’ must be given to all religions and non-religious worldviews. As outlined in 7.a. above, it is still acceptable in law for syllabuses to give more attention to Christianity than to other worldviews, religious or otherwise. Similarly, a syllabus may give more attention to a religion or non-religious worldview that has a particularly high local following or relevance. As the judgement states, ‘an RE syllabus can quite properly reflect the relative importance of different viewpoints within the relevant society... region or locality’.⁶

c. What the law does require, however, is that ‘equal respect’ be given to different religions and non-religious worldviews. For example, an RE course which provides for the study of religions of a small size or little relevance without giving comparable attention to non-religious worldviews of the same or a greater size or relevance will be unlawful. The judgement states that a syllabus that ‘give[s] priority to the study of religions (including some with a relatively very small following and no significant role in the tradition of the country) over all non-religious world views (which have a significant following and role in the tradition of the country)’⁷ would be unlawful.

Such a syllabus would not afford ‘equal respect’, would not be pluralistic, and would therefore be unlawful.

4. Paragraph 22, citing section 3 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

5. Paragraph 31(5) and *passim*.

6. Paragraph 74.

7. Paragraph 77.

What does this mean in practice?

8. The need to accord equal respect means:

a. other than in the case of 7.b., above, if at any key stage it is compulsory to systematically study a module on one or more of the principal religions other than Christianity, then it should also be compulsory to systematically study a module or modules on one or more principal non-religious worldviews (which in practice means Humanism);

b. similarly, if there is an option to study a module or modules on one or more principal religions, the choice should include a module or modules on one or more principal non-religious worldviews;

c. if there are thematic modules, those modules should include or allow for the study of principal non-religious worldviews to the same extent as any of the non-Christian principal religions;

d. at Key Stage 4, given (as explained in 6. above) that the examination boards' new GCSE courses will almost certainly not (owing to the new Department for Education specification) provide for the study of non-religious worldviews in the way specified in 8.a, b, and c, the GCSE course cannot be used as the entirety of the RE syllabus. Technically, additional teaching on non-religious worldviews would have to be provided alongside the GCSE, and agreed syllabuses cannot simply direct schools to follow the GCSE or a similar accredited qualification as the specified content

for Key Stage 4. This is obviously not an ideal situation, but it is, regrettably, the unavoidable consequence of the relegation of non-religious worldviews in the GCSE specification by the Department for Education.

9. Schools that are legally obliged to follow their locally agreed RE syllabus must go on teaching that syllabus. However, schools should provide additional content on

non-religious worldviews if their local syllabus does not include non-religious worldviews to the extent outlined above.

10. Schools without a religious character that are not bound to follow their locally agreed syllabus have responsibility for ensuring that the RE they provide properly reflects law as set out in the judgement. If such a school's syllabus does not include non-religious worldviews to the extent outlined above, the school should take steps to revise it.

11. Agreed Syllabus Conferences must take steps to ensure that their syllabuses include non-religious worldviews to the extent outlined above. Local authorities advised by their Agreed Syllabus Conference to adopt a syllabus that does not meet these standards should refer the draft syllabus back to their Conference. SACREs should take note of the legal requirements for RE in their deliberations and the advice they provide.

Humanism

12. About half the population regularly say they have no religion.⁸ Humanism is the non-religious worldview most relevant to the legal requirement, as it has a significance in the history, culture and present-day life of Great Britain as great as or greater than that of any of the non-Christian principal religions. In terms of followers, 6% of people identify as being not just non-religious but humanist (YouGov, 2014),⁹ more than those who identify as Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh, or Hindu. Around 36% hold the humanist worldview (IpsosMori, 2007).¹⁰ There are more humanist funerals in Britain than there are of many minority religions, and more humanist weddings than there are of any non-Christian religion (in Scotland, there are more humanist marriages than Roman Catholic or Church of Scotland marriages). There is a strong humanist movement in Britain and Humanism is well articulated, with numerous books both popular and learned. Humanists from George Eliot to Bertrand Russell, David Hume to David Attenborough have been enormously influential in the formation of British culture. Therefore, to the extent that Humanism is the most prominent non-religious worldview in Britain, a syllabus that excluded detailed study of Humanism but included such study of minority religions would almost certainly be unlawful.

Dr Satvinder Juss Professor of Law King's College London

28 April 2016

8. British Social Attitudes: see <https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/religion-and-belief-some-surveys-and-statistics/the-british-social-attitudes-survey/>

9. YouGov/British Humanist Association, November 2014.

10. Ipsos MORI/British Humanist Association, November 2006 - see <https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/religion-and-belief-some-surveys-and-statistics/>

Responses

Joint statement by NASACRE and AREIAC re: non-religious world views and RE

Commentary the Advice of Dr Satvinder Juss, King's College, University of London re: the High Court ruling on Religious Education

We have spoken to the DfE and can confirm that it is not for the British Humanist Association to issue legal guidance to schools. The DfE has confirmed that the guidance published in December is still correct (to access the guidance

[:https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488477/RS_guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488477/RS_guidance.pdf))

Likewise they state: *The Judicial Review of the Religious Studies (RS) GCSE was based on a narrow technical point relating to the meaning of a guidance document for Awarding Organisations. We strongly believe the judgment has no broader impact on any religious education (RE) curriculum or the RS GCSE subject content in either faith or non-faith schools)*

Recently clerks to SACREs, professional officers to SACRE, schools and academies will have received a mailing from the British Humanist Association that has an attachment with the title:

High Court ruling on Religious Education. Legal guidance on what it means for local authorities, academies, schools, teachers, Agreed Syllabus Conferences, and SACREs.

The publication comes directly from Professor Juss, Kings College, University of London in light of his understanding of the High Court judgement of Mr Justice Warby of 25th November, 2015.

It is important to recognise that the judgement by Mr Justice Warby was answering a specific point. The claim was that The Assertion made in the 2nd paragraph of the Religious studies GCSE subject content that was published in February 2015 was unlawful. The contested 2nd paragraph states, “By setting out the range of subject content and areas of study for GCSE specifications in religious studies, the subject content is consistent with the requirements for the statutory provision for religious education in current legislation as it applies to different types of school.”

In making his judgement on this specific question Mr Justice Warby said: I have no doubt that an RS GCSE specification consistent with The Subject Content *could* satisfy the state’s legal obligations. The question however, is whether it is true to say that such a specification *will* satisfy those obligations. The answer to that question is no; and it follows that in my judgment The Assertion is materially misleading.” (para 68)

To explain his judgement Mr Justice Warby, in paragraph 74, adds the following words: ‘...the complete exclusion of any study of non-religious beliefs for the whole of Key Stage 4, for which the Subject Content would allow, would not in my judgment be compatible with A2P1’[\[1\]](#). It is important to note that Professor Juss’s publication is guidance by one lawyer and not the statutory requirement as set out in current legislation. SACREs and ASC would normally consult their local authority’s legal services on matters such as these. Professor Juss finishes his advice by stating: *a syllabus that excluded detailed study of Humanism but included such study of minority religions would almost certainly be unlawful*. There are three points to note here:

1. It is the opinion of Professor Juss that to include minority religions but not Humanism would *almost certainly* be unlawful. Only a court could decide this.
2. The guidance appears to be discouraging agreed syllabuses to require the study of a ‘minority’ religion if Humanism is not to be studied. The legislation is clear that RE syllabuses must reflect the fact the religions to be studied are in the main Christianity and the principal religions represented in Great Britain – although what those principal religions are is determined by each Agreed Syllabus Conference.
3. The implication of the guidance is that there will be a systematic study of any religion as a requirement of an agreed syllabus. This does not follow.

According to our latest communication from the DfE (10th May, 2016), Mr Justice Warby’s judgement does not have broader impact on any RE curriculum, especially as it was explicitly confined to Key Stage 4. Whilst an ASC may wish to include the study of a non-religious world view, Professor Juss’s statement: ‘if there is an option to study a module or

modules on one or more principal religions the choice should include a module or modules on one or more principal non-religious worldviews' does not follow from the judgement. An agreed syllabus could make it explicit that in any module on a religion there should be critical engagement with the material and issues should be raised and explored as to the truth and worth of what the religion claims or asserts within a context of mutual respect. This would satisfy the expectation of the judicial review that non-confessional education about religions needs to be 'critical and pluralistic'. This is not the same as having the requirement to have a module on a non-religious worldview, such as Humanism, to sit alongside modules on the principal religions represented in Great Britain. Professor Juss appears to be arguing that a non-religious worldview should have equality of time with specific religious traditions, something that the judicial review specifically rules out (see paragraph 74 of the High Court judgement). SACREs and ASCs might wish to note Professor Juss's guidance, but there is no compulsion to act upon it. David Hampshire Dilwyn Hunt

Chair of NASACRE

Chair of AREIAC

ⁱⁱ A2P1 relates to: Human Rights Act 1998, of Article 9 of the Convention (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and Article 2 of the First Protocol ("A2P1") (Right to education)

Response from Andrew Copston to

Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP Secretary of State for Education Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT
27 May 2016

I am writing to you about a statement from your Department (published in a joint statement by two Religious Education (RE) bodies)¹ regarding the High Court judgment on RE and the guidance on it that we have circulated from lawyers to schools and to other relevant educational bodies.²

I am dismayed by the claims you have made about the BHA and its work in your statement and am writing for clarification on three points. Firstly, you say that it is not for the British Humanist Association to issue legal guidance to schools. I am not clear

on what grounds you are saying this about us. The BHA is a charity lawfully registered in England and Wales with legal Objects that include the promotion of Humanism and the provision of educational resources on Humanism. Seeking to support schools and those who set syllabuses to understand their legal obligations in relation to the teaching of Humanism in RE is an important and uncontroversial aspect of these objects. I would be grateful for clarification as to why the Government is questioning this activity. Secondly, you say the guidance is inaccurate. This is a very significant claim, which has the potential to undermine the BHA's credibility. We stand by the guidance absolutely, written as it has been by legal experts in the field. I would be grateful for details of the inaccuracies you allege. Lastly, you state that the legal challenge we sought to explain concerned a 'narrow technical point' and the judgment 'should not be taken as having any broader impact on any religious education curriculum'. In this, you are completely incorrect. The judgment is absolutely clear that, as a result of the relegation of non-religious worldviews like Humanism in the subject content for Religious Studies GCSE, the exam boards' 'GCSE specifications could be compliant with The Subject Content and yet fall short of delivering the RE obligations'. In other words, if an RE curriculum as a whole relegates non-religious worldviews like Humanism to the full extent that your subject content allows a GCSE specification to relegate them, then that RE curriculum would not be lawful. Given that many RE curricula around the country do this, your assertion that the judgment has no impact is misleading and risks encouraging schools and others to act unlawfully. We had previously understood that the statements to this effect contained within your December 'guidance' were simply a reflection of Government policy, rather than formal Government guidance on the law which you expected schools to follow. These recent statements, however, suggest that the latter is the case. Please can you clarify what it is that schools and those who set syllabuses should be doing in light of the judgment. As you will appreciate, we take the Government's claims about our work very seriously and so too its claims about what the law says. I look forward to your response in relation to our three points above.

Best wishes, Andrew Copson, Chief Executive, British Humanist Association

1 Joint NASACRE and AREIAC statement: <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-290-nasacreareiacresponsetodrsatvinderjussadviceupdated.pdf> 2 High Court Judgement on Religious Education: Legal guidance on what it means for local authorities, academies, schools, teachers, Agreed Syllabus Conferences, and SACREs: <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016-04-28-FINAL-High-Court-ruling-on-Religious-Education-legal-guidance.pdf>

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
6th July 2016
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities

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 dis-apply 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 Officers :

Emma Jardine-Phillips 07805692573

Mary Gale 07816374873

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
6th July 2016
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities**

**SACRE Budget 2015 – 2016 end of year.
Current budget 2016-17**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise members of SACRE of the end of year budget position for 2015-2016 and a current budget position for 2016-2017.

2 Summary

- 2.1 A breakdown of the end of year SACRE budget for the financial year 2015 - 2016 will be presented at the meeting.
- 2.2 A breakdown of the current SACRE budget for the financial year 2016-2017 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 had been made available to support the work of SACRE during the financial year 2015 – 2016 as approved by the Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning). The outturn statement is provided below.
- 4.2 The 2016-2017 budget will continue to be monitored in terms of the number of days that the RE consultant is permitted to support the SACRE. This is required to reflect the funding. See proposed budget.

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

Emma Jardine-Phillips 07805692573

Mary Gale 07816374873

SACRE Budget 2015/2016

Cost Centre EM1100

Expenditure from 01/04/15 to 31/03/16

Allocation	12,370.00
Carry Forward	800.00
	13,170.00

<u>Expenditure</u>	£
SDA Funding	6,500.00
Additional Days	3,900.00

Other	
RMB029127 - 08/07/15 SACRE Meeting	105.00
RMB024580 - 08/07/15 SACRE Meeting	45.00
RMB029128 - 11/11/15 SACRE Meeting	105.00
RMB024582 - 11/11/15 SACRE Meeting	45.00
REDN15028001 11th Annual SACRE Lecture	313.00
Spring Term SACRE Meeting	150.00
1 day for Caroline Johnson - Event 10/11/15	575.00
1 day for Mary Gale - Event 10/11/15	575.00
Booklets - PO rec 05/10/15	525.00
Staffordshire SACRE	90.00
NASACRE Annual Subs	95.00
AREIAC	70.00
Insurance Recharge	75.83
	13,168.83

Balance Remaining	1.17
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Updated 19/02/16

Other potential costs:

	0.00
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Remaining	1.17
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The 2016/17 budget is based upon the following –

The current 2016-17 budget is £12,590. £6,500 of this is currently paid across as part of the SDA. This leaves £6,090 for the remainder of the year (this needs to also fund the invoices already received approx)

However, Staffordshire county Council are currently subject to a spending freeze of non-essential items so it depends what the budget holder deems the SACRE spend to be. This aspect needs further clarification

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
6th July 2016
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities

Publications for SACRES to consider

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present SACRE members with a selection of suggestions as a result of the NASACRE conference.

2 Summary

2.1 Throughout the 2016 NASACRE conference, keynote speakers and NASACRE executive committee members made suggestions that SACRES might consider adopting in their meetings:.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the suggestions. That members use this as an opportunity to reflect on good practice.

4 Background

4.1 It is good practice for SACRE's to self-review and consider suggestions for future actions. This is reported on annually in the annual report.

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 Officers :

Emma Jardine-Phillips 07805692573

Mary Gale 07816374873

Educational Excellence Everywhere: the implication for SACREs

Chair of NASACRE, David Hampshire writes:

In March 2016 the government published the White Paper: *Educational Excellence Everywhere*. The White Paper sets out the government vision for schools which, if the proposals become law, will have an impact on SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences.

Firstly, there is the intention that every school will become an Academy by 2022. As agreed syllabuses do not have to be used by Academies, the question arises as to whether a local authority will need to review its agreed syllabus as required by the 1996 Education Act and the Statutory Instrument 1304 (1994). Similarly, SACREs were established to advise the local authority on RE and collective worship. If local authorities have no schools for which they are responsible, will they need advice on these two areas of school life?

Secondly, the White Paper indicates that the government will reconsider the role of local authorities and their functions. It is not clear whether this includes SACREs or not. If they are to be reformed, on what basis would this happen? Or, will they simply be abolished? The White Paper is silent on this issue.

Thirdly, statements on the National Curriculum in the White Paper are significant. The government seeks to set a standard that Academies will be able to go beyond in the National Curriculum but no Academy will have to follow it. Will the government seek to establish a national standard for RE given that no locally agreed syllabus would have to be followed? What is strongly indicated in the White Paper, is that Multi Academy Trusts will have responsibility for curriculum and therefore, what will be the requirements placed upon them for religious education and, further, collective worship? The issue of funding agreements is significant here, especially as all existing Academies (without a specifically religious foundation) have the current definition of RE and collective worship written into those agreements – which cannot be retrospectively changed – and a clear reference to Agreed Syllabuses.

Finally, it is important to focus on the current situation. Many White Papers have proposed changes that have not come about. However, certain things are clear:

1. For the time being, the current law remains in place. Local Authorities have to appoint and maintain a SACRE as set out in statute and statutory instruments.
2. Agreed syllabuses have to be reviewed at least every five years and a revised syllabus published on the recommendation of an Agreed Syllabus Conference.
3. These functions have to be maintained even in authorities that currently have no schools to which an agreed syllabus or SACRE's advice applies.
4. SACREs have to report annually to the Secretary of State on the advice they have given and the response to that advice.

It is also the case that Local Authorities are legally responsible for the education, training and recreation of all children and young people up to the age of 19 (and in some cases, 25 as a consequence of the Children Act 2004). This responsibility includes the religious education of pupils in whatever educational establishment they might be in, whether within or beyond the boundaries of the Authority. Hence, SACREs have a clear role in ensuring that the quality of religious education and collective worship is high for all children whether they are in a maintained community school or not.

All Party Parliamentary Group on RE report

Paul Smalley, Vice Chair of NASACRE provides a report of the APPG on RE meeting held in January 2016

Combating extremism, and promoting community cohesion and character development: the contribution of Religious Education to schools

The first meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Religious Education since the election was held on 19th January 2016. Fiona Bruce MP, Chair of the APPG, welcomed around 80 people including a number from the NASACRE Executive and local SACREs to Committee Room 10 of the Houses of Parliament. The speakers were mainly drawn from the Birmingham SACRE, with Nigel Genders giving a CofE perspective and David Hampshire, Chair of NASACRE able to bring some wider national thinking.

First to speak were Ron Skelton and Adiba Khan Head and Head of RE from Broadway school in Birmingham. Their school was held up as an example of good practice as they use faith and interfaith work to ensure they have 'rounded' pupils: promoting British values and developing character in RE. Their (mostly Muslim) pupils visit different places of worship, such as a synagogue, and are encouraged to discuss controversial issues, such as jihad.

Ranjit Singh Dhanda of the Nishkam Schools Trust, also based in Birmingham, suggested that faith inspires 'character' and therefore all children need to learn RE and to explore their own faith wherever they are at school. He spoke of how the Sikh tradition of respecting all faiths underpins the trust's schools. He wanted to ensure that existing legislation is upheld and put into practice to empower local SACREs and local authorities.

Marius Felderhof co-author of the book: *Teaching Virtue - The Contribution of*

Religious Education, explored the way Birmingham SACRE had been used by the authority after the Trojan Horse affair. He advocated a strengthening of inter-faith networks and suggested that 'RE and collective worship are essentially about character development'. He also recommended that all SACREs should be properly funded, that GCSE RS be included in the EBacc, RE teachers better trained in 'character' development, and increased funding for research.

David Hampshire, chair of NASACRE, focused on challenging the contemporary understanding of all extremism as being evil, and argued that extreme pacifism (as exemplified by the Quakers) or generosity (such as that of St Anthony) should be celebrated in schools. He stated that RE cannot change the world in an hour a week, but offers the opportunity to look at countervailing narratives, so that pupils can critique the totalising narratives of violent extremism – remembering that even our narrative about extremism itself is unfairly linked to Islam. He noted that the CORAB report alleges that there is too much positive spin on religions and yet there is a Christian heritage of dissent and protest. He questioned why, if RE has an important role to play in combatting extremism (as the Secretary of State suggests) it is not in the EBacc and not mentioned as part of the Prevent agenda.

Nigel Genders Chief Education Officer for Church of England asked 'What is RE for?' and suggested that viewing RE primarily as a means to an end risks distorting its primary purpose: of promoting theological enquiry and religious literacy. He said RE can make a contribution to combatting extremism, or developing community cohesion and character building, but we need to keep some separation between Prevent and RE. RE should focus on the impact of faith in the lives of believers, and provide the tools to answer the big questions, such as the source of identity that so many young people are searching for. He wants the whole curriculum used to develop SMSC and character.

Professor James Arthur, Director of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtue at Birmingham University, ended the presentations by giving a short history of the development of character education, an area he claims has consensus across all main political parties and for which interest is expanding globally. He thinks that education is more than simply examination success and schools should be value driven, involved in teaching intellectual, civic, moral and performance virtues.

There were a number of questions from the floor, including questions about the purpose of RE, the training of RE teachers and whether a National RE Curriculum or greater accountability measures are the best way to improve the subject's standing.

Fit for purpose?

A critique of the Purpose of Study and Aims of the REC's 2013 Framework for RE

NASACRE's Treasurer- Michael Metcalf shares a personal perspective on the RECs Framework for RE

Disclaimer: This article represents the views of the writer only. It should in no way be taken as reflecting the views of NASACRE or Staffordshire SACRE.

Recent reports charting the present fragmentation of RE envisage a national syllabus in RE, as part of the way forward. More recently still, the government appears suddenly to be taking steps to tackle the situation. Currently, the REC's proposed **National Curriculum Framework for RE** (2013) is at the forefront of the stage. It is therefore a matter of acute urgency and gravity to consider whether the Framework is fit for purpose, before it is too late and the Framework - or something very similar - is adopted and imposed by default, whether we like it or not.

A few months ago, I found myself heading up the re-writing of Staffordshire's Agreed Syllabus, as Chair of Staffordshire's SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference. To set the ball rolling, I started to look more closely at the Framework. I took particular interest in the opening sections, on the Purpose of Study and on the Aims of RE, which provide the rationale for the whole Framework. I discovered that I was experiencing some quite strong negative reactions to the text. This article is accordingly an attempt to articulate those reactions cogently and coherently, in order to test them out with colleagues, and to stimulate serious and urgent debate.

My main initial reaction had been one of disappointment and a feeling of anticlimax. Could this really be the document which would attract, motivate, and inspire the next generation of RE teachers, subject leaders and advisers? Where was the sense of enthusiasm for Religious Education, and a proper recognition of the "buzz" and the enjoyment that good RE can generate among pupils? A torrent of worthy but pedestrian prose smothered the presentation like the proverbial wet blanket. Perhaps I was being unfair; the text of the Framework had hardly been devised to "sell" RE to the world at large, but at least it might have made more effort to be upbeat about RE.

My further reactions are arguably much more serious. The first of these is that the Framework appears to be uninterested in what pupils bring with them into the school situation from their homes and communities, and how this interacts with their work in RE. The Framework states right at the start that RE sets out to "provoke challenging questions..."; but it does not apparently set out also to respect and recognise pupils' existing identities, their emerging faith, or the communities they may already belong to. The pupil is conceived of as an individual without any roots, who must be helped to find

their lonely way in the world without reference to anything already there for them beyond the school gates.

This individualistic and arid ideology is compounded by an excessive emphasis on rational skills and processes, at the expense of adequately appreciating the affective element in religion, and indeed in life itself. According to the Framework, religion is there to be "explained", "analysed", "appraised", "evaluated". The awkward fact that there is a non-rational dimension to religion (even maybe to non-theistic stances also) is quietly swept under the carpet. In consequence, the Framework appears to be biased in favour of a quite aggressive rationalistic stance over against religion, all religion, and to be promoting – consciously or unconsciously - a secularist critique of religion as such.

One factor which may be at work here is the pressure to ensure that RE is academically rigorous and respectable, and can robustly defend its corner in comparison with other subjects. This is a fair concern, but only up to a point. There is an inescapable tension between the academic study of religion, and the inclusive character of Agreed Syllabus RE, a tension exemplified by the problems that arise for schools and Agreed Syllabuses as they seek to cater for Key Stage 4 pupils.

It seems to me that the Framework has too much of an eye on GCSE performances and programmes, and on the hoops exam pupils will have to learn to go through, and not enough of an eye on the needs, capabilities and interests of the general pupil. Is a GCSE course really the most appropriate strategy or model for every pupil, to build on what has gone before? Does not the GCSE goal distort the essence of RE, and introduce an unwanted emphasis on rationally manipulating religious data and knowledge, to satisfy some external arbiter?

So, is the Framework "fit for purpose? No, it is not, as far as its underlying philosophy is concerned. Can it be rescued and re-jigged? Not without much hard thinking and reflection. It's not a simple matter of modifying the text here and there. Who's going to do this work? You and I. If we don't engage with the task now, it may be too late. The Framework is already there, warts and all, in the forefront of the stage.

To the Chair of the APPG on Religious Literacy

Submission from Rev Prebendary Michael Metcalf

Preliminary note: I am making this submission in a private and personal capacity. However, my experience and context include the following: Chair of my local SACRE for around 15 years; Treasurer and Officer of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) since its beginning in 1993; Chair of Stafford and District Friends of Faith (affiliated to the IFN(UK)); NASACRE representative on the IFN Council and active contributor to IFN proceedings. I am a retired Anglican priest and educationist.

Question 1

The term “religious literacy” can be given several meanings, and be pressed into use for various agendas. For me, religious literacy is a concept similar in meaning and significance to the concepts of literacy and numeracy, and modelled on them: it comprises **a core of practical, insightful knowledge together with a range of social, inter-personal skills essential for living successfully in today’s world**, within the specific context of the diversity of religious and non-religious presences locally and nationally/ internationally. “Religious literacy” therefore is applicable to everyone. It is an inclusive and neutral term, and it conveys rightly the sense that religious literacy is a vital and even mandatory element in each person’s proper self-development for today’s world.

However, this does not mean that each person has to become a walking encyclopaedia of knowledge about religion and religions (and non-religious stances). On the contrary, religious literacy is always going to be a “work in progress”; it is just as important to be aware that there is much that one does not yet know as it is to have achieved a sound basic core of knowledge, insight and skills. Equally, it is more important to foster an attitude of purposeful receptiveness towards new insights than it is simply to accumulate “facts”.

While this “sound basic core” will be largely similar for every member of our society, the paths by which it is achieved will vary according to the point and context from which each individual starts. The journeys towards such a core will be different, for instance, for a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Humanist or someone who is personally indifferent about religion. Indeed, one part of becoming religiously literate is to gain a wider understanding and awareness of the religious tradition one may have inherited oneself, including divergent expressions and divisions within that tradition.

Literacy and numeracy are primarily impersonal in the manner in which they are acquired and used. In contrast, religious literacy engages with the personal as part of its very essence, in two ways. First, it involves a measure of self-awareness and self-understanding concerning who one is, where one belongs, and with whom one has close allegiances. Secondly, it calls for the development of values, skills and inward dispositions appropriate to living with the reality of religious diversity in a plural and open society, including the confronting of bias and prejudice wherever this may occur, in oneself or others, and being sensitive to what might cause deep offence or outrage to others.

In a perhaps crude and simplistic but graphic way, religious literacy may be depicted as being about “Them”, “Me”, and “Us”. “Them” are the people who are different from me religiously: who are they, and what do I need to know and understand about them? “Me” is about my self-awareness: how do I perceive myself and express my identity? What are my fundamental values, beliefs, allegiances and aspirations? “Us” is the challenge of shaping a society which enables “Them” and “Me” to come together and live harmoniously and inclusively side by side, so that “Them” and “Me” become “Us”. The “Them” corresponds, in the above discussion, to the core of insightful knowledge. The “Me” stands for self-awareness and self understanding. The “Us” relates to the development of appropriate shared values, inter-personal skills, and inward dispositions.

Questions 3 and 4.

One important extension of the concept of Religious Literacy applies to institutional culture. In a plural society, it is vital that all major institutions foster and embody a **culture of religious literacy** throughout the institution: government and governmental departments; the media; public services of all kinds, e.g. the health service, schools and universities, the police. Institutionally, it is utterly inadequate, potentially even disastrous, to delegate all the

responsibility for religious literacy on to some “religious affairs” representative or specialist department. Rather, all senior appointments in major institutions should include religious literacy as part of their job specification. The promoting of religious literacy should likewise be an integral part of a shared corporate vision. (This paragraph applies also to Questions 5 and 6.)

In the school context, Religious Education is the obvious channel through which Religious Literacy can be mediated. However, if the school is indeed fostering an institutional culture of religious literacy, this will permeate the whole life of the school. In such a case, religious literacy will be embedded in school events and assemblies, and in the visual ambience of the school in general. It will be given a sharper focus within RE, but will require for its realisation a collegial effort involving SMT, all staff, and the whole governing body.

I quote from a **draft** version of the new Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus in RE, currently in preparation.

The role of Religious Education in schools is to help prepare and equip all pupils for life and citizenship in today's diverse and plural Britain, through fostering in each pupil an increasing level of religious literacy.

In consequence, the Aims of RE within the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus are that pupils should acquire:

(1) an increasing core of insightful knowledge concerning religions and beliefs, both in Britain and in more global terms;

***-By exploring religious beliefs, teachings and practices –** so acquiring knowledge and understanding of religious stories, sacred texts, lifestyles, rituals and symbolism that offer insight into religious experience and living within a faith community.*

(2) a developing capacity to engage with ultimate questions and to formulate their own sense of identity and values;

***-By engaging with fundamental questions –** so appreciating the human and religious questions that are raised by life and its experiences, and through which meaning, significance and value are forged, and by expressing and evaluating their personal responses to such questions- so gaining skills to be able to relate the things studied and discussed, to their own experience.*

(3) a growing range of the social, spiritual and emotional skills and dispositions appropriate to living well in a religiously plural and open society;

***-By reflecting** on the reality of religious diversity and on the issues raised by living in a diverse world - so developing skills of analysis and discernment in relation to prejudice, discrimination and bias, together with skills of self-awareness, moral judgement and responsible choice.*

