

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

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present SACRE members with reports on the Westhill Project Legacy

2 Summary

2.1 Follow up on the Export-Engage-Reflect conference originally supported by Westhill/NASACRE. This report shows how this work now continues in a revised format to support learners in Staffordshire in their exploration of Christianity and Islam. Mary Gale attended one of the events in Stone to report back to SACRE on its impact.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the reports

4 Background

4.1 During the year 2017-2018 SACRE received a grant from Westhill/NASACRE to launch the new Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE through a conference entitled Explore-Engage-Reflect. Youth Net in conjunction with the Entrust Minority Ethnic Advisory Service (MEAS) team have taken this forward and are providing support and resources and workshops on Christianity and Islam, for those schools who choose throughout Staffordshire.

7 Equal Opportunities

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

8 Financial implications

8.1 Financial implications that need to be considered are whether SACRE is willing to provide funds from its budget to further support the project so that more Staffordshire learners receive the opportunity to engage. Costs that need to be covered is the input from Entrust MEAS team to support the learning on Islam. This would then keep the costs down for Youth Net and therefore the costs for schools.

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Explore, Engage, Reflect Conference in Stone 1st – 3rd of October 2018

Background

During the year 2017-2018 SACRE received an award grant from Westhill/NASACRE to support the implementation of the new Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE through a conference entitled Explore, Engage Reflect”.

Youth Net in conjunction with Entrust MEAS team have taken this forward and are providing support through resources and workshops on Christianity and Islam, for those schools who choose throughout Staffordshire. This enables learners to encounter diversity at first hand.

Report

Schools received an invitation letter to take part in the conference There was a choice of morning or afternoon sessions. Eight schools accepted the invitation and as a result almost 600 children from First and Primary schools took part in the Islam and Christianity Conference run by Entrust and The Youth Net staff supported by a group of volunteers at the The Crossing Community Centre, near Stone railway station. This took place over three days.

The costs **per session** were as follows Entrust - £190.20, The Youth Net - £60.00 and a donation to Community Centre to cover refreshments - £7.80

This equalled a cost per child of £2.15.

The activities were led by Alison Way of The Youth Net and Waheeda Qureshi of Entrust, with assistance from volunteers from local churches.

This conference offered an inspirational face to faith experience for pupils run by a team of education consultants who are also adherents of Christianity or Islam thus enabling pupils to learn together about issues regarding faith, diversity and what it means to live out beliefs today, in dynamic and exciting ways. It also acted as an exceptional CPD opportunity for the staff and volunteers attending as throughout the day, they were given an opportunity to increase their subject knowledge, learn how to engage with technology and learn how to use the methods of ‘Explore, Engage, Reflect’ to enhance learning back in their schools.

The pupils were given the opportunity:

- To learn about faith and beliefs through **exploring** artefacts, images and text
- To think for themselves, **engaging** with key questions relevant to the people of faith they will meet
- To think deeply and creatively about the value of faith **reflecting** on what it means for people to live a faith within England through a real opportunity for dialogue.

The learning methods were creative and focused on thinking about the values, traditions and lives of modern Christians and Muslims in England today. There was an opportunity for schools to capture their learning via their own iPads, creating an e-book and uploading this to a virtual classroom where learning could be shared by all the participating schools.

The children experienced both the Christian and Islam exhibitions, plus an additional hands on activity related to their learning.

I spoke to a number of pupils who were enthusiastic in their responses. They especially enjoyed all the hands on experiences. One pupil stated, *‘I know now that Christians and Muslims give money to help people’*.

Another said ‘Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, I love the time called Christmas we have lots to celebrate. Eid sounds like fun too where people eat special food and celebrate’.

One young pupil commented, *‘I have learnt that the church and the mosque are special places. I am a Christian and try to follow the teachings of Jesus.....it’s hard at times!’*

The volunteers were also enthusiastic in their praise of the event and said that they too had gained much from the workshops. The only negative comments involved the timings and the logistics of travelling to the venue and then back to school.

Here is an excerpt from a report written by Waheeda Qureshi a member of the Minority Ethnic Support Team at Entrust who led the learning about Muslims in England today.

The children were split into three groups and spent 40 minutes in each exhibition to explore the teachings of the religion in a very interactive way. Staff were on hand to introduce the religions, set the children tasks to complete and children had the opportunity to handle various artefacts and costumes belonging to the two religions. For the remainder of the 40 minutes children took a comfort break and resume their learning by making a large jigsaw of the world map to find out where the religions began, how old they were and which country had the largest Muslim and Christian population. They also had to help Reverend Janice decide which cross to take on her visit into the community.

The Conference was enjoyed by both adults and children and was an ideal opportunity to engage in the teachings of two very prominent religions in a fun and interactive way. Both adults and children admitted that they learnt lots of new things about the two religions! Mary Gale from SACRE attended and was pleased with the way the Conference was set up and run. One of the Headteachers of the local school was impressed by the quality of resources and teaching available to the children

I have to agree with Waheeda's comments!

Mary Gale Adviser to SACRE