

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
17th November 2021
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and
Communities
An Update on Key Issues

1 Purpose of Report

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

2 Summary

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

3 Recommendation

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

4 Background

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

4.2 Members will be briefed on these key developments.

5 Equal Opportunities

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

6 Financial implications

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

Contact Officer

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Key Issues Report November 17th, 2021

i) Westhill Legacy project- Explore, Engage, Reflect in conjunction with Youth Net. Autumn Term 2021.

This project is restarting this term. A timetable of workshop support for schools has been devised. The chosen schools are mostly concentrated in the Newcastle area this term. The workshops started in October 2021 and will continue this term until December. It is hoped that seven schools will have had support by the end of term. Mary Gale will visit the schools to receive feedback and quality assure the project in November and December. This feedback will be presented at the February 2022 meeting.

SACRE have funded this project through commissioning the Entrust Minority Ethnic Achievement Service- MEAS- to deliver workshops on Islam in conjunction with Youth Net who will deliver workshops on Christianity.

ii) Continuous Professional Development

Mary Gale has been supporting RE leaders in several schools through email, virtual meetings and face to face meetings. This has involved supporting schools in understanding *greater depth* in RE assessment, whole class reading through RE texts, planning and preparation for Ofsted '*deep dives*'.

Planning support is needed most. Mary has re written some of the planning to support schools. One topic that needed a refresh was learning about *Sacred Texts* in year 5.

Church of England schools have also asked for support with preparation for their next SIAMS inspection. Mary Gale has facilitated this.

iii) Update on Sacred Spaces/ Christianity conference. The Big Picture work in conjunction with Youth Net

This project is aimed at key stage 3-years 7, 8 and 9 in High schools.

This conference has been designed to give an overview of Christianity and it covers Worship, Prayer, the Bible, Church, Jesus and Big Questions.

This experiential learning is supported with an introduction looking at 'Who is God' and then an opportunity for Questions and Answers at the end.

This is now being advertised and schools have been offered the opportunity to take part.

A timetable of support for schools will then be devised.

iv) Ofsted reports update

The Ofsted schedule of inspections resumed fully in Autumn 2021.

References to RE are made in 150 out of 3,000 national reports so far. On the whole the references indicate that RE needs to improve.

One school in Staffordshire had a deep dive into RE this term and was found to be lacking. They had confused the Agreed Syllabus with the resource called Understanding Christianity

and told the inspectors that UC was the AS for Staffordshire. Mary Gale is now supporting this school.

There will be a further update in the February 2022 meeting.

v) Report writing for the LA

The consultant -Mary Gale was requested to write a report on the impact of the SACRE on schools over the past couple of years.

Here is a copy of the report.

How SACRE has facilitated the improvements in education outcomes for Staffordshire schools over the past two years.

All schools in Staffordshire have available to them support for the delivery of RE and Collective Worship this is through the work of the SACRE.

The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus is the primary document that supports the delivery of quality RE, this is written and agreed by the SACRE

Monitoring of Staffordshire school RE provision is carried out by SACRE.

- There was a 95% increase in responses in 2021 compared to previous years. This increase was due to the fact that governors were encouraged to support their schools in carrying out the monitoring through the Entrust Governor Information Pack.
- This has resulted in governors and leaders being more aware of their statutory duties with regard to the delivery of RE and RS teaching in their schools.
- The Agreed syllabus has a positive impact on teaching and learning in schools as evidenced through the monitoring of provision survey.
- 100% of the responding schools agreed that the Agreed Syllabus clearly presents what is required by their school in RE.
- 100% of the responding schools agreed that the Agreed Syllabus provides effective guidance for assessment in RE.
- Provision of RE for pupils is good with over 70% of responding schools stating that they meet the statutory requirements in line with the recommendations of the SACRE in the Agreed Syllabus guidance.
- Over 80% of responding schools had reviewed RE provision in the past 3 years as a result of prompts from SACRE and had improved their RE delivery as a result.
- Overall, Religious Studies (RS) GCSE results from the most recent external data base found that the aggregated national results of state funded schools in 2019 for Grade 9-5 were at 60.9% compared to Staffordshire's 50.9% - therefore Staffordshire is closely in line with national for Grades 9-5. Comparison from previous years have found a similar pattern.
- The aggregated national results of state funded schools in 2019 for Grade 9-4 are at 72.4% compared to Staffordshire's 2019 Grade 9-4 are at 64.7%

In 2020 Staffordshire results improved to 74% for Grade 9-4 compared to the National of 78%. (We know these results have to be treated with some caution due to the anomaly over the awarding of grades)

- Where schools were identified through external data bases and monitoring as not teaching RE to its pupils, interventions were carried out and the process for leaders to receive support was strengthened eg through Headteacher Performance Management support.
- Training, pre covid, supported schools and their staff in teaching and assessing RE this was in the form of network meetings and day courses. Quality assurance from these courses indicated that this improved the delivery of RE and improved the % of pupils working at the expected standard as per the Staffordshire Agree Syllabus assessment criteria.
- Support during Covid-19 has been through email. Support for planning and collective worship has been higher than in previous years. SACRE have initiated the provision of resources such as planning grids and Collective worship to support the delivery of quality RE and Worship.
- Impact of support for the Agreed Syllabus through workshops and visits to school have through quality assurance shown that they have a positive impact on the understanding of diversity and world views.

vi) Attendance at NASACRE training

Mary Gale, the associate consultant, attended virtual training on the writing of the annual report and the implications for the next annual report from the SACRE.

See Appendix 1 for the new format for next year's report.

vii) Association of Religious Education Inspectors and Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) and the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) Meetings.

Mary Gale attended a virtual Midlands AREIAC group meeting on 22nd June. Items discussed included.

Ofsted's Research Review
[Nobody Stands Nowhere - YouTube \(eventbrite.com\)](#) Theos Think Tank
A Statement of Entitlement and Expectation" Collective worship CofE Education Office
Templeton Grant to fund a toolkit of materials
Ian Stevenson's Research "Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation"

The next meeting is on 30th November 2021

The next local meeting of the NATRE group will be held in Chadsmead Primary Lichfield on 23rd November 2021 at 4.30. Mary Gale is hoping to attend.

viii) Standards and achievement

Staffordshire SACRE reviews and discusses standards and achievement in RE during meetings as appropriate. There were no external examination results from the summer of 2020 due to the pandemic.

Throughout 2020-21 Religious Education network meetings which schools can choose to attend would have included moderation of standards across year groups and schools to support schools with the judgements they make against the revised 2016 Agreed Syllabus Age Related Expectations. There were no face-to-face courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The advisor offered to provide support information through an online virtual webinar, but no schools took up this offer.

a) Public examination entries in Religious Education (RE) and Religious Studies (RS)

In the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, legal requirements state that RE should be provided as part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils attending a maintained school, this includes High schools.

Background

At Key Stage 4 all pupils should fulfil their entitlement by following as a basis an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies. Schools should provide reasonable time for pupils to complete this and if appropriate, to attain an external qualification.

At KS5 pupils may follow the programme of study provided within the Agreed Syllabus or an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in Religious Studies.

Schools that do not offer this opportunity to their students are requested to apply to the SACRE for a variation of practice. This academic year no schools have applied for, or been granted, a variation.

Staffordshire SACRE recognises the independence of Academies and Free Schools. However, it commends the Agreed Syllabus to them as a constructive and collaborative way to meet their legal requirements in Religious Education.

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Update

During lock down due to the Covid-19 pandemic this was a not a priority for schools, although schools made reasonable adjustments to adhere to the requirement. In the majority of schools RE was not a priority. In summer 2021 there were improvements to the delivery of RE and RS. Schools are now in the autumn term offering their normal RE and RS delivery. They spent the time during Covid-19 evaluating their planning and as a result some schools are reporting that their delivery is now improving.

b) Overall GCSE results 2020-21 not just for RE

The GCSE system continues to use the new grading of 9-1, with 9 being the exceptional grade. There were no external public examinations in 2020-21.

Grades were awarded following different processes in 2020 and 2021 after public exams were cancelled for all schools in the UK. This led to a large increase in the share of top grades.

c) Religious Studies GCSE 2020

Background information

The number of pupils taking GCSE Religious Studies in England has remained stable in 2020 despite ongoing challenges, reflecting the relevance of the subject and its popularity among young people.

In England, RS GCSE entries for the full course fell by less than 1% to 225,719 compared to 227,913 in 2019. Overall entries in England, including both full and short courses, fell by 2.3% to 243,786, compared with 249,443 in 2019.

Full course entries in 2020 were still almost one third higher than in 2010.

Full and short course entries reached a high of 461,795 in 2011 but declined rapidly as schools in England opted not to enter pupils into the short course following Government policy changes, despite a requirement among all schools, including Academies, to provide Religious Education to all pupils at all key stages.

The key outcomes for Religious Education in England at Key Stage 4 in 2020 are as follows:

There were 225,719 entries in England, a fall of less than 1% from 2019 (227,913 England

Despite a decline since the peak in entries, the number of pupils receiving a full course GCSE in Religious Studies in England in 2020 (225,719) is still 32% greater than in 2010 (170,767).

Staffordshire information

We cannot yet report to SACRE precisely the data for our schools regarding RE and RS however the following information provided by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales and the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education gives the national picture for A-level and GCSE entries this year.

Staffordshire LA have been unable to provide a break down school by school of the RE/RS grades. This request is being investigated. However, there are some overall figures to report.

Key outcomes

Staffordshire % entries for the full RS course in 2020= 46%.

England % entries for the full RS course in 2020 = 39%

Therefore, Staffordshire entered 5% more than England.

Staffordshire % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020= 74%

England % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020= 78%

Therefore Staffordshire % of students achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 was 4% lower than the England average.

Historically

2019 National Average 9 to 4= 72.4%

2019 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4= 64.7%

Therefore Staffordshire % of students achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 improved by 9% compared to the England results which improved by 6%.

Caution- grades were awarded following different processes in 2020 and 2021 after public exams were cancelled for all schools in the UK. This led to a large increase in the share of top grades.

d) Religious Studies A-level

The number of Religious Studies A-level exam entries has declined at a lower rate than other humanities in 2020, performing better than some subjects despite a backdrop of overall declining entries and changes to the examination system.

15,692 RS A-level entries were recorded in England and Wales this year, compared with 17,490 in 2019. This represents a decline of 10.3%.

The overall number of A-Level entries in England and Wales fell in 2020 year 2.6% from 768,217 in 2019 to 748,905 in 2020. The reduction reflects both a smaller cohort of 18-year-olds (599,393 in 2020 compared with 618,873 in 2019 [Office for National Statistics]) and changes to the assessment of A level and AS examinations that had an impact in 2018, when most schools changed their policies to recommending three A-levels, versus four in previous years.

The number of AS exam entries also declined by 24.6% following AS and A-level reforms. The demographic shift and changes to the examination system mean that it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions from comparisons with previous years.

The key outcomes of the 2020 A level results in England and Wales for Religious Education are as follows:

15,692 RS A-level entries were recorded, a decrease of 10.3% on 2019.

Despite the decrease in entries for RS, there are still 41% more entries than in 2003 (11,132 entries were recorded in 2003).

The relative stability of entries suggests that candidates continue to recognise the value of RS A-level for Higher Education entry, graduate employment, and as a valuable life skill.

It has not been possible to access the 2020 A level results for Staffordshire schools to date.

Agenda Item 4 Appendix 1

Format for the new Annual Report from Sept 2021 onwards

NASACRE in conjunction with the DfE will be carrying out a national analysis of Annual Reports using this framework from September 2021.

1. An introduction including:

- Table of contents
- Words from the Chair of SACRE
 - welcoming new members, celebrating successes, thanks, etc.
- Overview, number of times SACRE has met and attendance at meetings, venues, and a brief

overview of content of these meetings including Self-evaluation too – link to SACRE

Development plan

- Overview as above for the ASC if this is currently sitting, working groups, progress
- Executive summary (if report is over 10 A4 pages long this might be helpful as a separate document, so readable for schools?)

2. A section on RE (statutory responsibilities) including:

- The local agreed syllabus and RE in schools, including whether any academies have adopted

the LAS

- Monitoring the AS, relationship with an AS review
- Work of the ASC and associated working parties if this is currently sitting showing progress, links to other work nationally or locally
- Standards and monitoring of RE
 - This can include monitoring by scrutinising exam data, conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls, presentations from teachers. What has SACRE done and how has the monitoring helped SACRE to commend successes and support improvements?
 - Have any schools applied for or achieved REQM awards?
- Teacher training and materials and advice for schools
- Other information (withdrawals and how the SACRE monitors, advises or supports schools with this, complaints)
- Advice to the LA

3. A section on Collective Worship (statutory responsibilities) including:

- Standards and monitoring of CW

- This can include monitoring by scrutinising Ofsted reports, conversations with schools, teacher groups, website trawls, presentations from teachers. What has SACRE done and how has the monitoring helped SACRE to commend successes and support improvements?

- Determinations

- How many are current and how many have been applied for and what happened? Link to Determination Process documents online. Is that refreshed, or does it need updating?

<http://www.nasacre.org.uk> Page 2

- Teacher training provided (locally or national training circulated to schools) materials and advice for schools

- Other information (withdrawals and how the SACRE monitors, advises or supports schools with this, Complaints)

- Advice to the LA

4. A section on links with other bodies

- National bodies, e.g. NASACRE, the REC, central faith and belief organisations

- Local bodies, e.g. Dioceses, Inter Faith Groups, Peace Walks, HMD events

5. A section on other areas of SACRE involvement locally

- Governor training

- Advice on issues within the community, e.g. Ramadan advice for schools in partnership with

the local communities

6. A section on SACRE's own arrangements (statutory responsibilities) including:

- Professional and administrative support and how the LA supports the SACRE (clerking, adviser, links to council initiatives)

- Membership, representation & recruitment - quoracy, issues and successes with recruitment

- Training for SACRE (and ASC) members

- Finance given to SACRE for its work

7. Appendices

- Table of GCSE – short and full, A/S & A Level RS results

- Details on CPD provided to schools

- Any LA/SACRE policy statements on RE or CW

- Development plan tied to funding
- Circulation details for this AR