

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
1st February 2023
Report of the Director for Children and Families
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; These have been dealt with elsewhere or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

Contact Officer

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Key Issues Report

i) **Advisor**

Mary Gale has been commissioned by SCC through its trading arm to support the Staffordshire SACRE for a number of years and the revision of the Agreed Syllabus.

This commission needs to be reviewed for the financial year 2023-2024, commencing April 1st 2023. Entrust and SCC have not yet indicated their wish for this commission to continue. Mary Gale has contact both parties after expressing her wish to continue. She has expressed the need for there to be an increase in the support for schools due to the launch of the AS. The outcome has not yet been decided. Watch this space.

ii) **Continuous Professional Development**

Mary Gale continues to support 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.

Entrust commissioned Mary Gale to run a face-to-face autumn course on 22nd November 2022 at Entrust. 20 schools booked onto this course. The course was well received. It concentrated on a summary of the forthcoming revisions to the Agreed Syllabus. We shared resources and ideas for effective RE. The feedback was very positive. More courses will be planned once the Agreed Syllabus is launched.

Governors through the Spring 2023 Governor Information Pack received an update on RE in Staffordshire which included the status of the AS and the process for the review. They have been encouraged to work in their link governor roles to discuss the impact of the current AS. This information has reached 300 plus schools and over 200 leaders, including governance professionals from a variety of schools- both maintained and academies. This information was well received once again.

Mary attended virtual meetings of the West Midlands Association of Religious Education Inspectors and Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) and a local National association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) online meeting. The next meetings are on 6th and 14th March 2023.

Discussions in the November meetings centred around resources, the national plan for RE and the hijab protests in Iran.

Mary attended a Church of England conference on January 27th 2023 looking at various education issues.

A verbal report will be presented in the February 2023 meeting.

iii) **Westhill Legacy project- Explore, Engage, Reflect (EER) in conjunction with Youth Net. Autumn Term 2022 report.**

SACRE have funded this project from the 2022-2023 budget through commissioning the Entrust Minority Ethnic Achievement Service- MEAS- to deliver workshops in conjunction with YouthNet.

There was a delay in the release of money from the SACRE budget. Mary Gale followed this up with Entrust and SCC. The budget has now been released and dates for the Spring term 2023.

The following dates have been confirmed for 2023.

Monday 6th Feb at Springhead Primary at Talks Pitts

Monday 6th March at Ravensmead at Bignall End

We are awaiting for the date to support Baldwins Gate CE VC Primary school.

Seven additional schools in the Newcastle area have been contacted and we are awaiting replies.

iv) Work force data

This data was reported by schools to the DfE as part of the school census in November 2021

Hours taught for years 7 to 13, in subjects RE, philosophy and all subjects, reported by state-funded secondary schools with electronic timetabling software.

School Workforce Census 2021

61 Staffordshire schools are included.

Aspects to note:

Some schools reported that they allocate teaching hours to a specific year group but have not included RE in that report. Mary investigated this issue by checking the school websites.

Mary contacted or visited these schools, and the issue is not always with the teaching of RE/RS but with the admin of filling in the census.

It is the general feeling that the census return is not essentially a true account as the census form may have been populated incorrectly.

Many of the schools reporting no RE/RS taught are Catholic schools and we are certain that RE/RS is taught.

Mary will continue to work on this project as time and resources allow. We are optimistic that the next census return will show an improved picture.

v) Freedom of Information Request- report from the clerk Simon Humble