

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
7th February 2024
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) Annual report

This was discussed at the previous meeting and some minor tweaks were made.

This was then sent to SCC- Tim Moss, the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement Children and Families. He made a few minor tweaks too so now this report will be sent onto NASACRE and various education organisations locally as well as being available through the school E Bag and added to the SACRE website.

ii) Websites

There is now an Entrust website for RE/RS in schools which can be accessed by following this link:-

<https://www.entrust.education/Page/35474>

Support for planning and resources is also available following the above link.

This information has been shared with over 300 schools through the Governor Information Packs and through face-to-face meetings x2 and webinars x5.

There is also a SACRE website, which can be accessed by following this link:-

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SACRE/Home.aspx>

The SACRE website information will be shared with schools in April through the Governor Information

pack, webinars =, face to face meetings and the electronic bag (e bag) for headteachers

iii) Westhill Legacy project- Engage Explore Reflect (EER)

SACRE have continued to fund this project from the 2023-2024 budget through commissioning a dedicated trainer and not through the Entrust Minority Ethnic Achievement Service- MEAS- to deliver workshops to support the Agreed Syllabus. Mary Gale held a meeting with Entrust to verify that SACRE could directly commission the workshops, and this was agreed as Entrust do not currently have the capacity to support the workshops.

As a consequence, planning meetings were organised with a new trainer- Hifsa Haroon Iqbal. (Hifsa has just been appointed onto our SACRE)

In addition, Mary Gale visited eight of the schools to evaluate the need.

The following workshops were delivered in **Autumn 2023**

Perton First school 28th November

St Luke's Cannock 29th November

Penkridge Middle 1st December

Chancel Primary Rugeley 4th December

Walton Priory Middle 11th December

Spring 2024

Sir John Offley Madely 15th January 2024

Reginald Mitchell Primary Newcastle 5th February 2024

Stafford Manor High 6th February-

Flash Ley Primary 7th February Stafford

The Croft Primary at Armitage 20th February 2024 (To be completed)

Summer 2024

Oldfields Middle School Uttoxeter TBA

St Michael's CE Penkridge TBA

The feedback from the workshops has been very overwhelmingly positive.

Schools were asked to rate the workshops on a scale of 1-5 and we have 99% scoring the workshops at 4 or 5.

Here is a flavour of some of the comments.

What did the pupils learn?

Children and staff thoroughly enjoyed the Islam workshop. The children were asked to remove their shoes at the door and this grabbed their attention quickly. Once they were seated the purpose for this was explained and children were immediately made to feel comfortable and empowered to ask questions. There was a range of activities that suited all children. The children were able to touch and explore the artefacts, ask questions and be curious. Staff were able engage in practical tasks with the children, and staff were able to improve their own subject knowledge too!

Pupils were able to hear information from a person with first-hand experience of the faith. They were interested to explore the faith and fascinated with the information given. The two sessions were aimed at the relevant SoW being taught and really supported the curriculum.

We do teach about Islam – however the real opportunity to meet and chat with a practising Muslim was invaluable. Hands on opportunities to look at dress, pictures, artefacts with a back story was very valuable.

Any standout comments from the pupils/impact of the workshop?

“That was so interesting”

“It was really fascinating and taught me lots of information.”

“It was really cool to hear the information from someone who is a Muslim and who could share their experiences.”

“It really taught me a lot and will help me with my teaching.”

“What a fascinating talk, I learnt a lot.”

PUPILS LEARNED ABOUT MANY DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF ISLAM, AS DISCUSSED AND AGREED WITH HIFSA BEFOREHAND. THESE INCLUDED THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM, PRAYER AND TRADITIONAL COSTUMES.

Children were fascinated with the clothing, the opportunity to try and to learn about the importance of prayer. They were surprised to know about the amount of visits to the mosque and the commitment to pray.

Pupils gained a greater understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam.

All pupils were thoroughly engaged in the activities when looking at each area of the Five Pillars of Islam and were able to discuss and take part in role play.

Any standout comments from the staff/impact of the workshop?

“What a fantastic experience for staff and children alike”

The talk was brilliant and really appreciated. I have been able to refer back to it many times in my lessons and it has helped pupils to recall the information.

I would love to arrange to repeat these two sessions again at the same time next year.

HIFSA WAS INCREDIBLY WARM AND WELCOMING TO THE STUDENTS. STUDENTS REALLY ENJOYED TRYING ON COSTUMES AND HOLDING THE DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS ARTEFACTS. THE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES IN A CAROUSEL STYLE WENT DOWN REALLY WELL.

Is there anything else you would like to say about the workshop?

Knowledge of Hifsa, her relationships with pupils and the way in which she set up the space and welcomed pupils into her ‘home.

Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to participate in the workshop!

Hisfa was absolutely amazing. Her organisation, use of personal materials/artefacts, knowledge, understanding and guidance throughout the workshop was exemplary.

Some year groups focused on topics such as

Year 8

10. Five Pillars 1 – Shahadah & Salah

11. Five Pillars 2 – Zakah, & Sawm

12. Five Pillars 3 - Hajj

13. Symbolism in Islam

14. Muslim moral code

15. Religion of giving - Charity

16. Celebrations in Islam – Eid

I FEEL THE WORKSHOP WAS PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE WHEN HIFSA SPOKE ABOUT HER PERSONAL PRACTISES IN ISLAM, FOR EXAMPLE HOW SHE FITS IN PRAYER TO HER BUSY WORK SCHEDULE (SOMETIMES IN A SHOP CHANGING ROOM) AND HOW, IF SHE IS FEELING NOT QUITE 100%, SHE DOES NOT FEEL THAT SHE WOULD HAVE TO FAST THAT DAY DURING RAMADAN. ALSO, THE RANGE OF CLOTHING, BOOKS, ART WAS FANTASTIC.

I WOULD DEFINITELY LIKE TO INVITE HIFSA BACK AGAIN TO REPEAT THE WORKSHOP. IN ADDITION, I WILL CONTACT HER IN THE FUTURE TO SEE IF SHE COULD RETURN AND SPEAK TO KS3 CLASSES TOO.

If possible, we would want to arrange for my team of RE teachers to be supervising the talks as a form of CPD on subject knowledge.

iv) **Ofsted Report on RE/RS Autumn 2023**

Ofsted has been monitoring RE more robustly as part of the inspection process- this has spurred schools to review and enhance their delivery of RE/RS

Extract taken from Ofsted's Annual Report 2022-2023 and its commentary on Religious Education presented by Amanda Speilman senior HMI.

RE in schools is generally of poor quality. Although it is a statutory subject **in all** schools, many often consider RE as an afterthought.

As a subject on the curriculum, it is under-valued.

RE is a complex subject, and the lack of clarity and support from government makes schools' job harder. Some schools steer through these challenges well, but most do not. We found that:

- Many schools do not meet the statutory requirement to teach RE at all stages.
- Pupils are rarely taught enough substance to prepare them to engage in a complex, multi-religious and multi-secular society (where religion and non-religion play different parts in different people's lives)
- Too often, schools do not teach topics in the RE curriculum deeply enough for pupils to develop a substantial understanding of the subject matter.
- Non-examined RE is typically not high quality.

All pupils should develop a broad and secure knowledge of the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions. It will take coordinated effort by stakeholders to improve the quality of RE in schools:

- Schools need high-quality professional development to teach RE well.
- Curriculum publishers need to identify clearly what pupils will learn and when, building on knowledge over time, so that pupils develop a deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions.
- The government should provide clear expectations about RE provision in schools. Schools should follow these. Current non-statutory guidance for RE should be updated and include clear information for schools about the breadth and depth of the syllabus they are expected to teach.

The report is available by following this link:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-202223-education-childrens-services-and-skills>

Staffordshire have recommended that governors and trustees check:-

- Through link governors that RE is being taught in schools- this applies to all schools from Reception classes up to 6th Form
- That maintained schools are following the 2023 revised Agreed Syllabus (AS).
- Discuss the report as part of monitoring and evaluation.

Deep Dives by Ofsted into RE

Why is RE often not featured in a “deep dive”?

A Bar Chart based on Ofsted’s data shows RE appearing third from the bottom of subjects that were selected to be included in a “deep dive” in secondary schools inspected in 2022/23 and at the bottom of the chart in primary schools inspected in 2022/23.

Please follow this link for more information.

[Schools commentary: Deep dives in school inspections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-commentary-deep-dives-in-school-inspections)

Ofsted is not permitted to inspect in RE in a VA school designated with a religious character as RE in these schools could only be inspected under a Section 48 inspection.

v) **Blasphemy in schools report- see pdf document.**

vi) **Attendance at various meetings by the adviser**

The adviser attended the RE Hub meeting on November 16th 2023 led by Chris Giles. SACREs had been asked to provide information about the impact and the activities of the SACRE over the past year. Unfortunately, most of the meeting time was taken over by the new NASACRE chair who gave a history of his involvement in RE matters, leaving very little time to discuss the expected focus.

All delegates received an apology from Chris Giles a few days after the meeting. A date for a future meeting is to be advised.

The adviser also attended an online meeting of the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) on 28th November 2023 where a variety of subjects were discussed including the Ofsted report on RE and the Deep Dives.

In addition, the adviser attended a local online NATRE meeting in November plus a face-to-face meeting with S Dennis from Chadsmead Primary Lichfield who is a HLTA that organises the online RE network meetings.

The adviser has been supporting SD in ensuring that any information shared regarding the Agreed Syllabus is accurate and follows the statutory aspects.