

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
8th November 2017
Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities
Explore-Engage-Reflect

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To share with members the progress made following the outcome of the Staffordshire SACRE bid for a Westhill/NASACRE Award.

2 Summary

2.1 Westhill/NASACRE Awards encourage schools to engage with diversity through projects which will generate compelling learning experiences in RE for young people, relevant to today's context.

2.2 Each year grants of up to £4,000 have been awarded to support suitable projects submitted by schools through their SACREs.

2.3 Staffordshire SACRE has been awarded £2,725 to complete the proposed Explore-Engage-Reflect project.

3 Recommendation

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

4 Background

4.1 Staffordshire SACRE's Explore-Engage-Reflect project will take place on the 22nd November 2017. The project is now nearing capacity with 89 delegates from 18 schools attending. Schools include primary, middle and secondary phase settings.

4.2 SACRE members will be updated about the progress of the project at the Spring term meeting.

4.3 The project webpage is now live: <http://www.westhillendowment.org/staffordshire-sacre/Home>

4.4 The project outline is attached.

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 Expenses incurred will be met from the SACRE budget.

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“Exploring – Engaging - Reflecting”: embedding the new Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus in RE

Rationale

In July 2016 the new Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus in Religious Education was adopted by the County Council for use from September 2016; the Syllabus had an official launch in January 2017. During the current academic year (2016-17) numerous launch events have been held for subject leaders, so that schools should be fully compliant with the new Syllabus by September 2017. Feedback from schools on the new Syllabus has already been very positive. The county contains almost 400 state-funded schools, well over half of which are still funded through the county and will therefore be using the new Syllabus – say around 235 schools. It is expected that many academies in the county will also be transferring to the new Syllabus.

The Syllabus affirms that the role of RE is to foster in each pupil a growing level of religious literacy, through three complementary aims, encapsulated as Exploring, Engaging, Reflecting. The first two of these correspond to the standard themes of “Learning about” and “Learning from” religion. The third aim is innovatory and radical: it calls for pupils to “acquire 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”.

While this aspiration relates realistically to the demographic situation in the country as a whole, the population in Staffordshire is markedly less diverse than that of neighbouring authorities, of the region, and of England, both in religious variety and in numerical presence. The statistics given in the Appendix reveal and present certain challenges for teachers as they work to bring the third aim “to life” in the classroom, and so enable their pupils to have the opportunity and experience of engaging in and reflecting on religious diversity.

Staffordshire SACRE was particularly mindful of these statistics during the creation of its new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. There was a deliberate intention to ensure that despite the limited diversity in the county, Staffordshire’s pupils would be both required and supported to understand more fully and reflect on the religious diversity of our nation. Staffordshire SACRE is seeking to support and empower schools to fulfil the requirements of the third aim through the creation of a face to faith experience entitled ‘Explore - Engage - Reflect’. In seeking to draw pupils out of their comfort zones into engaging with the reality of diversity, the new Staffordshire RE Agreed Syllabus will help to shape future generations.

The project: Explore - Engage - Reflect

Staffordshire SACRE is applying for a Westhill/NASACRE award of £4000 in order to offer Staffordshire pupils an interfaith encounter that supports and promotes the syllabus aims. The intention is to provide a compelling learning experience with a firm foundation for schools to build upon. Specifically, Staffordshire SACRE intends to:

- Set up an interfaith experience called ‘Explore - Engage - Reflect’ which will be based in a central location in the county of Staffordshire. ‘Explore - Engage - Reflect’ will have a Christian and Muslim focus and the experience will be led by adherents to the faiths who are skilled in the field of education. The experience will take the form of a morning encounter with Christianity and an afternoon encounter with Islam (or vice versa). It will be designed to be fully interactive with pupils **exploring** artefacts, images and text; **engaging** with key questions relevant to the faiths in question; and **reflecting** on what it means to live your faith within England through a real opportunity for dialogue.

- Schools will be invited to attend 'Explore - Engage - Reflect' and bring a representative group of pupils accompanied by a teacher. To ensure we cater for both primary and secondary schools the experience will be aimed at pupils in Year 6 and Year 7.
- Pupils will visit the experience in small groups and will be given an ipad to use to document their experiences. Using an app called 'Book Creator' pupils will be able to video, photograph, record voice notes and add text to enable them to capture their learning in a virtual environment. Collaborating with their peers will support the opportunity for thorough investigation and meaningful exploration and dialogue. At the end of the day, schools will be asked to upload their e-books into a virtual classroom hosted by Showbie. Showbie is available either as an app on ipads or on any android device. Pupils will be able to access and share their learning with others when they return to school. A resource pack of preparation and follow up materials will be provided to prepare schools for using the technology and to support pupils to get the maximum benefit from the experience.
- The virtual Showbie classroom will act as a legacy resource, supporting schools and equipping them to meet the requirements of the third syllabus aim. It will document the experience of the exhibition, allow pupils to share their learning creatively with their peers, act as an inspiration and a guide for schools wishing to put together their own interfaith experience in school. The virtual classroom will be made available to all Staffordshire schools as a supportive aspect for the syllabus.
- *School staff experiencing 'Explore - Engage - Reflect' would be encouraged to attend their local NATRE group to present the professional development opportunities they benefitted from by engaging with the experience.*
- The local press and County Councillors will be invited to experience 'Explore - Engage - Reflect'. *A follow up article will also be written for RE Today magazine.*

Staffordshire SACRE believes that this project will:

- Promote dialogue between the young people of Staffordshire and give them an opportunity to explore the religions around them.
- Provide capacity for extended community impact through encouraging schools to meet and work together and to engage meaningfully with the religious communities around them.
- Provide a CPD opportunity for subject leaders both on the day and at future NATRE meetings.
- Meet a specific need within Staffordshire. The nature of Staffordshire means that it is often difficult for schools to deliver interfaith experiences for their pupils. Staffordshire SACRE will connect schools with organisations that are ongoing and can support with this aim both during and after the event.
- Empower schools to produce interfaith events in the future through a legacy document that will support schools to plan future events successfully
- Be sustainable. The sustainability of 'Explore - Engage - Reflect' long term is important and the two organisations we plan to involve are sustainable and their work can be developed.
- Focus on widening participation and reach where appropriate and possible. The experience will be based in a central location and offered to schools where there will be maximum impact. Inviting schools that are already working collaboratively or where it would help them to work collaboratively in the future will ensure that benefits gained from participation in 'Explore - Engage - Reflect' have maximum impact. *Schools will be required to complete an impact form sharing how they have disseminated their experience back in their schools.*
- **Numbers: 80 pupils from 20 schools (+ 20 members of staff)**

Delivery of “Explore - Engage - Reflect”

- The Youth Net will be commissioned to deliver the Christian based content for ‘Explore - Engage - Reflect’. The Youth Net is a Stafford based Christian charity whose leader Sam Phillips is a member of SACRE (Committee A, Free Church). It exists to:
 - Support and resource churches in their delivery of excellent children’s, youth and schools work;
 - Support and resource schools in their delivery of an excellent RE and SMSC curriculum;
 - Network, encourage and equip children’s, youth and schools’ workers;
 - Deliver excellent children’s, youth and schools work;
 - Support children and young people to flourish spiritually, emotionally, educationally and socially.
- Waheeda Qureshi, member of The Linguistic and Cultural Mediator (LCM) team at Entrust, and Mohammed Fahim (former team member and now independent) will be commissioned to deliver the Muslim content for ‘Explore - Engage - Reflect’. Entrust works in partnership with Staffordshire schools, academy trusts and the county to provide specialist support, ensuring every child and young person:
 - receives a good education;
 - is in a safe and healthy environment;
 - and is given expert guidance to realise their full potential.
- Emma Jardine-Phillips, Education Consultant, County RE Adviser and Advanced Skills Teacher in RE will be commissioned to oversee the project and report developments to NASACRE/Westhill.