

**Herefordshire
Standing Advisory Council on
Religious Education
(SACRE)**

**Draft SACRE Annual Report for the Academic
Year 2015/16**

1 Herefordshire SACRE Annual Report 2015-2016

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is a statutory body set up to advise the Local Authority on matters related to religious education and collective worship. Its members are drawn from teachers, Local Authority representatives including Councillors, faith representatives from the Church of England and a range of Christian denominations, and representatives from other religious groups represented in the region.

SACRE's key functions include monitoring the provision and quality of RE, and providing advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the agreed syllabus. This includes advice on methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and provision of teacher training. This is primarily done through the review and implementation of the locally agreed syllabus, a process which is required every five years. This is followed by on-going monitoring of its effectiveness in the light of changing national education policy.

SACRE is grateful to Herefordshire County Council for its continuing support, but notes that in the current reduction in funding across the Council, SACRE has not been spared. SACRE endeavours to offer maximum support to schools through its use of conferences and network meetings. However, it has had to reduce the number of SACRE meetings from three to two, replacing one with a meeting of a 'strategy group', who undertake to prepare reports or undertake research to move the business of SACRE forward.

Herefordshire SACRE met twice in 2015-2016. The minutes of these meetings are available from Governance Support on councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Herefordshire SACRE's strategy group met in July 2016.

2 Supporting RE in Herefordshire

The key activities of SACRE over the period 2015-16 have focused on maintaining support for teachers as they implement the revised agreed syllabus for RE, launched in the summer of 2015. 66 teachers from 47 primary schools attended the primary launch; ten teachers from seven secondary schools attended the secondary launch. Copies of the revised Agreed Syllabus were sent to all schools who had not been able to make it to the launch conferences, with an accompanying letter from the School Improvement Adviser.

Worcestershire and Herefordshire SACREs now share the same agreed syllabus, so training that is available for either county is made available to neighbouring schools.

3 SACRE Primary RE Conference 2016

Two conferences were planned, on 7th June 2016 (Worcester Racecourse) and 8th June 2016 (Whitecross School, Hereford). The conferences had the same programme and they were both offered to teachers in both counties. Numbers for the Hereford-based conference were insufficient to allow it to go ahead but the majority of teachers who had booked were able to attend the Worcester-based day.

40 teachers attended overall, although only six of those were from Herefordshire schools. The programme took teachers deeper into the new agreed syllabus and included sessions on teaching Christianity, Islam and Judaism with 4-7s, teaching religions through texts and stories, and creative teaching and learning approaches. These were led by Stephen Pett and Fiona Moss from RE Today. A highly successful part of the conference was the "Speakers' Corner", where three Worcestershire teachers talked about how they had been implementing the new syllabus in their schools, with practical ideas and suggestions.

Overall, 85% of delegates rated the value of the conference as excellent, and 15% as good.

Comments from head teachers and teachers attending included the following representative sample:

- A fantastic course – great to hear ideas for lessons and share my own. Inspiring. Reassuring for things we already do in school. Motivating for next steps. Thank you.
- Wonderful to have the opportunity to be given lots of ideas to make the syllabus come to life.
- Always good practical ideas, many of which I will use and always great to meet other RE teachers and share ideas.
- Super ideas of activities to use practically to engage and challenge the children. Thank you very much.
- Excellent ideas that are easy to implement and transfer to different stories/religions.
- Love the practical activities – very engaging for us. Like how the activities are cross-referenced to the syllabus. Lots of good ideas to use back in school.
- Great to be able to see/hear in comfort. Very engaging mix of look, listen, discuss, do, reflect. Very useful lesson suggestions which tie in with AS and provide high quality learning opportunities. Specifically like ‘text & stories’ ideas which can be applied to different situations, not just ‘one off’ ideas.
- As a new coordinator the course was highly beneficial. Great resources and ideas.
- Speakers’ Corner was really useful – thanks to all who presented.

SACRE Strategy Group discussed the disappointing turnout from Herefordshire schools. This was a significant drop: we have regularly had over 30 Herefordshire teachers attending for a number of years now. Suggestions as to reasons were to do with cost (although £100 for quality CPD is well below the market rate); more effort needed in communicating with schools – e.g. getting a slot at Primary Heads’ Forum, outlining benefits for schools; include information in ‘Spotlight’ bulletin from the LA, and Diocesan newsletter (although they did advertise conference 3 times). Issues about the timing were also raised, but the move from a September conference in 2008 to the summer conferences since 2009 has proved successful. SACRE will work to ensure that the conference in summer 2017 will reach as many Herefordshire schools as possible.

4 Secondary RE Conference: June 2016

A joint conference was held with Worcestershire secondary schools. Numbers were small but the conference ran anyway, and was a great success with all who attended. All sessions were rated ‘excellent’ by all delegates, and the 100% rated the overall value of the conference ‘excellent’. Topics included ‘deeper learning in RE’ and ‘Teaching Christianity’, with Stephen Pett from RE Today; SOLO taxonomy with Joanne Harries, and a session where teachers shared their ideas and resources. Two new heads of department attended and they found the support offered by other delegates extremely helpful. The following comments make clear how teachers found the day:

- Brilliant and inspiring
- Really great support – thank you so much!
- Although a small group, a quality day, full of ideas
- Excellent and valuable day
- Very informative and a welcoming atmosphere. Some inspirational resources and ideas were shared.
- As a non-specialist I felt at ease and encouraged to begin planning.
- Amazing fabulous ideas

SACRE strategy group discussed the low numbers. One significant factor was that there had been an alternative day conference earlier in the year for local heads of RE at South

Bromsgrove High School as part of their teaching school role. If schools are only allowed out on one training day a year (and some have no training), then attending that one would have affected their booking for the SACRE conference. In 2017 the plan is to combine the SACRE conference with South Bromsgrove High School, to maximise numbers and impact through support and cooperation rather than competition.

6 Commentary on exam results summer 2015

[To follow]

7 Quality of teaching in Herefordshire.

SACRE has been unable to monitor quality of teaching in Herefordshire this year. Ways of monitoring will be considered by SACRE in 2016-2017 as part of the monitoring of the impact of the revised agreed syllabus.

8 Future support for RE

On-going support for teachers, developing their ability to plan, using the new agreed syllabus planning steps, and for improving teaching and learning in RE, is planned for 2016-2017, including:

- A day for teachers in local Special Schools took place in October 2016
- Annual SACRE conference for primary teachers, focusing on ideas for teaching and learning, based on the new syllabus, including planning, assessment and deeper learning in four religions, in partnership with Worcestershire SACRE.
- Annual SACRE secondary conference, in partnership with Worcestershire SACRE and South Bromsgrove High School, focusing on supporting teachers in deepening their understanding of Islam, as part of the challenge of teaching the new GCSE specifications, as well as ways of developing assessment and planning for progress, and handling difficult issues surrounding Islamophobia in the classroom.
- School Survey to assess impact and value of revised agreed syllabus.

9 Other matters:

SACRE considered several pertinent issues over the year, including:

- GCSE and A level results
- National reports on RE (*A new settlement: religion and belief in schools*, by Linda Woodhead and Charles Clarke; *RE for Real* from Goldsmiths College; *Living with Difference*, from the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life
- The High Court judgment by Justice Warby on the place of non-religious worldviews in the new GCSE Religious Studies criteria and its impact on local RE.

The chairman thanks members of SACRE for their support and Herefordshire RE teachers for their commitment and enthusiasm as they implement the revised agreed syllabus. He also thanks Stephen Pett for all his advice and professional support.

Cllr John Stone
Chair of SACRE
November 2016