

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

**Draft SACRE Annual Report for the Academic
Year 2016/17**

1 Herefordshire SACRE Annual Report 2016-2017

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 2016-2017. The minutes of these meetings are available from Matthew Evans, Clerk to SACRE (matthew.evans@herefordshire.gov.uk). Membership has declined and one of the meetings was not quorate. This is an issue SACRE is seeking to address, especially as it has been the teacher representatives who were missing.

Herefordshire SACRE's strategy group did not meet in July 2016; the long-term support from RE Today Services, who have supported Herefordshire SACRE since before 2008, was put on hold while the Local Authority established its protocols for renewing contracts.

2 Supporting RE in Herefordshire

The key activities of SACRE over the period 2017-18 have focused on maintaining support for teachers as they implement the revised agreed syllabus for RE. SACRE has commissioned a local teaching school to draw up a guide for visits and visitors for schools, including contact names and details.

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 Conferences 2017

Herefordshire and Worcestershire share the same agreed syllabus, and so two conferences were offered this summer. They were held Monday 19th June (Pear Tree Inn, Worcester) and Tuesday 20th June (Whitecross School, Hereford). The conferences had the same programme and they were both offered to teachers in both counties. 24 teachers attended the Worcester conference and 21 teachers attended the Hereford conference.

The programme was on the theme of 'Thoughtful RE: preparing pupils for life'. It was led by Julia Diamond-Conway and Stephen Pett from RE Today, with sessions on living religion and belief, ideas for RE with 4-7s, and flexible strategies for using the visual and performing arts to deepen pupils' understanding. Razwan Ul-Haq, a Muslim artist and educator, joined the day to explore how to handle difficult issues in RE, in particular with regard to Islamophobia. Teachers also took part in a 'speed dating' activity to share classroom ideas.

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

- Very good conference with lots of useful ideas and resources to take back to school.
- Fantastic opportunity to share ideas in a friendly and informative way. Teaching strategies suggested (e.g lesson starters, everyone/no one believes, can be adapted for all age groups). Great to share experiences of places of worship/visitors.
- I would have been interested to attend both workshops, as they were both valuable, rather than sharing ideas with other teachers. It was very useful to hear ideas about using thinking skills in RE in practical ways.
- Great resources; great to have perspective from Razwan; thank you for all links etc. Easy listening, great connections.

Following the disappointment of the cancellation of the summer conference in 2016, it was good that the Herefordshire conference went ahead this summer, albeit at a loss for the organisers (RE Today). The decline in attendance at these conferences is a concern, with multiple factors involved. The primary conferences at Whitecross had been regularly attracting between 40 and 70 delegates, with excellent feedback. SACRE will be looking at ways of encouraging participation in 2018.

4 Secondary RE Conference: June 2017

In 2016, numbers for the secondary conference were very low, in part because an alternative day conference had been arranged by a local teaching school (South Bromsgrove High School) in the neighbouring county of Worcestershire. SACRE decided it would be better to join the two conferences, to maximise numbers and impact through support and cooperation rather than competition.

As a result of this decision, a joint conference was held on 29th June 2017, partnering with Worcestershire SACRE, Wigmore Teaching School Alliance (Hereteach), South Bromsgrove Teaching School Alliance, RE Today and the National Association for Teachers of RE (NATRE). Over 80 teachers attended, with a focus on subject knowledge for GCSE. Faith representatives from the six major world faith traditions were present, with keynote addresses from Kate Christopher and Stephen Pett (RE Today). 90% of delegates rated the event as 'excellent'.

Despite this successful day, no Herefordshire secondary schools attended. SACRE will be exploring the possible strategies for meeting the needs of local schools.

5. Support for special school RE

A day for RE in special schools was held in October 2016. Anne Krisman, Head of RE at Little Heath Special School, Redbridge, and senior Tibetan Buddhist nun, Tsuiltrim Tenzin Choesang, led the day, including sessions on planning, teaching Islam, British Values and SMSC, and using singing bowls in reflective practice. Comments from the 17 delegates included:

- A well-balanced and focused course
- Everyone REALLY friendly. Lovely to have a specific SEN day
- Lots of examples given but less about strategies and ideas to take away. Good to network and meet people in other special schools.
- A really nice relaxed day, which provided time to chat with other schools about different strategies/practices used. The different sessions have given me confidence in my planning, resourcing and a next step plan.
- Sharing ideas with other teachers was beneficial
- It has been useful to talk to other teachers who lead RE – swap ideas etc. It's given me the confidence that what I have planned and developed is ok!

Actions teachers intended to pursue in response included:

- Dissemination of info gained from planning RE. Exploration of use of singing bowls within the school

- More individual-based teaching; focus on key points/themes; use of RE days and RE weeks
- Looking at how to fit 5 Keys approach into the school curriculum; encourage staff to address RE in explicit way
- Getting to the core; being more creative/experiential
- Network with other schools; add to resources; buy singing bowls!
- Network with people from the course. Send a staff survey around to gauge current understanding; plan for multimedia sessions

A further follow-up day is planned in 2018.

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 2017-2018 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 2017-2018, including:

- A day for teachers in local Special Schools is planned for 28th March 2018 at the new Buddhist retreat centre near Ledbury, Herefordshire.
- 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, Gloucestershire SACRE, Hereteach, South Bromsgrove High School, RE Today and NATRE, focusing on supporting teachers in deepening their understanding of Christianity and Islam, as part of the challenge of teaching the new GCSE specifications, as well as ways of developing assessment and planning for progress.
- 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
- NASACRE survey of SACREs
- Commission on RE

Cllr John Stone
Chair of SACRE
November 2017