

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: **Monday, 3rd March, 2008**

Time: **2.00 p.m.**

Place: **The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35
Hafod Road, Hereford**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the
meeting.

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**County of Herefordshire
District Council**

AGENDA

for the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

To: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor WU Attfield, Mrs. C. Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mr. P. Bowen, Mrs. J. Brown, Mrs A Daniel, Councillor P Jones CBE, Miss L Langstaff, Ms. K. Mayglothing, Mrs S McCamley, Mrs. G. Morris, Sr. D. O'Donnell, Mr Z Pandor, Revd L Rickards, Mr M. Rollnick and Revd. I. Terry.

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY) To receive details any details of Members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a Member of the Committee.	
3. MINUTES To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2007.	1 - 8
4. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY) To answer any pre-received written questions from members of the public.	
5. SACRE RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT HEREFORDSHIRE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES PLAN To consider SACRE's response to the draft Herefordshire Children and Young Peoples Plan.	
6. FINDINGS FROM SCHOOL MONITORING VISITS - AUTUMN 2007 - SPRING 2008 To report the findings from school RE monitoring visits undertaken between Autumn 2007 and Spring 2008 and to discuss issues or themes arising from the visits.	
7. SACRE CONFERENCE 2008 - UPDATE ON PLANNING To consider plans for the 2008 SACRE Annual Conference.	
8. SPEECH BY JIM KNIGHT MP, MINISTER OF STATE (SCHOOLS & LEARNING) To consider the content and implications for SACRE of the speech by Jim Knight MP, Minister of State (Schools & Learning) given at the QCA/NASACRE conference on 17 January 2008. A copy of the speech is included in this agenda.	9 - 12

9. DUTY OF SACRE TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY COHESION

To consider the duty to support Community Cohesion particularly in relation to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) publication "Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion".

Copies of the publication have been supplied to members of SACRE. Copies are available to the public from DCSF Publications (quote Ref 00598-2007DOM-EN) or from the web site www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

10. FEEDBACK ON THE 2ND MULTI FAITH EVENT HELD JANUARY 2008

To receive feedback from the 2nd Multi Faith Event held January 2008 run by the Herefordshire Multi Faith Development Group.

11. QCA GUIDE FOR WRITING AN AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

To note the publication by QCA of guidance to Agreed Syllabus Conferences on reviewing or revising a local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education using the National Framework.

Copies of the publication by QCA have been supplied to members of SACRE. Copies are available to the public from QCA or from the QCA web site http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_15608.aspx

12. ROLL OUT OF THE NEW SECONDARY CURRICULUM - UPDATE

To receive an update on the roll out of the New Secondary Curriculum.

13. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT TO QCA

To inform SACRE of changes to the format of the SACRE Annual Report to QCA.

14. NASACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

To nominate a delegate to attend the NASACRE Annual Conference to be held 10.30am at Mander Hall, Hamilton House, London on Thursday 8th May 2008.

15. FUTURE MEETING DATES

To note future meeting dates for SACRE.

The Council's meetings diary is still provisional and therefore the Clerk will write to confirm the dates of SACRE meetings as soon possible. The following provisional dates have been identified.

- 2pm Tuesday, 24th June, 2008, at Brockington, Hafod Road, Hereford
- 2pm Monday, 1st December, 2008, Shirehall, Hereford.
- 2pm Monday, 9th March, 2009, Shirehall, Hereford.

COUNTY OF HEREFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 10th December, 2007 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor WU Atfield, Mrs. C. Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mrs A Daniel, Councillor Brig. P Jones CBE, Miss L Langstaff and Revd. I. Terry

In attendance: Councillor SJ Robertson (Chairman of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee)

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Mr P Bowen, Mrs J Brown, Ms K Mayglothling, Mrs S McCamley, Mr M Rollnick, Mr Z. Pandor.

14. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

15. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 2nd July 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

16. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

No written questions had been received.

17. INTRODUCTION TO THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES PLAN

SACRE received an overview of the Children and Young People's Plan for Herefordshire.

Philippa Granthier, Business Manager – Children's Trust, informed Members of the arrangements to move to a Children's Trust and the governance arrangements to support this move.

She also reported that the current Children and Young People's Plan would run until March 2008. The Council as lead partner has a duty to ensure that a new plan is put in place. The new plan will run from April 2008 to March 2011 and will be the one, overarching strategic document for children and young people in the County. It will lay out what the priorities for improvement should be in Herefordshire, based on a needs assessment exercise drawn from data on children and young people in the County along with areas highlighted from the Annual Performance Assessment and discussions with Government Office for the West Midlands.

The plan will need to lay out the intended outcomes for children and young people to improve their well-being which is defined by the five Every Child Matters outcomes of

being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. The plan will also need to cover all children and young people aged 0-19, young people aged 20 leaving care and up to 25 for those with learning difficulties.

This strategic document will be supported by an annual delivery plan, which will contain the detailed actions that will be undertaken to achieve the intended outcomes.

The draft plan was currently being written. A number of emerging priorities for Herefordshire were emerging and these, together with further details of the consultation to be undertaken, were contained in her report, copies of which were circulated at the meeting. Consultation on the draft plan would end in March 2008.

SACRE noted that while the Local Area Agreement with the government contained an element of grant funding for Children and Young People, no new resources were anticipated to support the objectives, rather, as a strategic document it would direct the use of current resources by the Council and its partners.

SACRE further noted that the plan was principally directed by government guidance, particularly by the Every Child Matters agenda, and therefore while a child's emotional needs may be reflected in the plan the child's spiritual needs may not.

In view of the detailed consideration needed to respond to the high-level strategic document it was suggested that a small group be formed to undertake a review of the draft document and report their suggested comments to the March 2008 meeting. SACRE could then decide whether to formally recommend the comments to the Local Authority.

RESOLVED: that

- a) **Miss L Langstaff, Revd I Terry and the Chairman, Councillor J Stone, assisted by the Consultant for RE, consider the draft Children and Young People's Plan and report their suggested comments to the March 2008 meeting; and**
- b) **At the March 2008 meeting SACRE will debate the suggested comments of the group and consider whether to formally recommend any comments to the Local Authority.**

18. MULTI-FAITH EVENT 2007 AND POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENT

SACRE received a report on the 2007 Multi-faith event held on 25th and 26th September 2007 and considered the possibility of holding a future event.

The Consultant for RE reported that the 160 ten and eleven year old pupils from 16 primary schools across the county had taken part in a multi-faith conference to learn about Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. The 2 day event held on the 25th and 26th September took place at Holmer CE Primary School, Hereford and was five times over-subscribed.

She reported that the children met people from different non-Christian faith communities and learnt about their religions by getting involved in creative workshops including music, art, dance, story telling and role-play of the way other people celebrate their faith.

The conference had been organised by a partnership between the Herefordshire Multi faith Development Group members and Holmer primary school, with grant

funding from the Herefordshire Local Network Fund. Excellent and inspiring workshop leaders came from across the country. Judy Cecil, head teacher at Holmer primary school and event organiser, wanted as many children as possible to share in the day and used ICT to do this. Video conferencing was used to enable two other primary schools to share in aspects of the event. A film crew made up of Year 6 children from Holmer school, together with their teacher captured the event and worked hard to put together 'Photostories'. These were shown during the 'Celebrate and Share' assembly at the end of the day. Excerpts were shown to SACRE at the meeting and are available on the web at www.hereford-edu.org.uk.

The Consultant for RE commented that the Children had really enjoyed the workshops that combined activities with spirituality. They had been intrigued by the way calligraphy and Rangoli patterns were not just shapes and patterns, but how these expressed deeper beliefs. They were fascinated by the meaning of the traditional dress of a Sikh and enjoyed the reflective experience of Sikh music. They noticed how belief in one God (the same God!) was central to the lives of all four faiths despite each person seeming very different on the surface. She further commented that in future events it would be good to have more time to understand the things which matter most (the spirituality, values and beliefs) to the person representing each faith and to use strategies and activities (such as the RE Today Commitment Game) to support reflection and to enable children to ask questions and think about their own response.

SACRE noted that the 2007 event had cost £4,500 and had benefited from a lot of voluntary help.

Since the event St James' CE Primary School, Kimbolton, had organised their own multi-faith day in which Zac Pandor, Maurice Rollnick and Daxa Mehta had lead teaching sessions.

In relation to a further event the Consultant for RE was pleased to announce that funding from the Local Community Fund was enabling a similar multi-faith event, run by the Herefordshire Multi Faith Development Group, to be held on 22nd and 23rd January 2008, at Holmer Primary School, Hereford.

SACRE congratulated all those concerned in organising and running the very successful event and hoped that those schools that hadn't attended would do so in the future.

Members noted that SACRE had a very limited budget and was unable to offer financial support, however, in view of the many areas of curricular education and personal development covered by such an event, SACRE strongly suggested that the Local Authority consider funding a similar event for the Secondary school sector. SACRE noted that Whitecross High School may be interested in holding such an event.

RESOLVED that

- a) **The report be noted and the congratulations of SACRE be extended to all those who had organised and run the event; and**
- b) **SACRE strongly suggests that the Local Education Authority consider funding a similar event for the Secondary School sector.**

19. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXAMINATION RESULTS 2007

SACRE considered the Religious Education examination results for pupils in Herefordshire.

In response to the Religious Studies 2005-2007 statistics set out at appendix 1 in the agenda the Primary School Improvement Manager presented the following comments:

1. Over the last 3 years there had been a significant shift in exam entry patterns with schools moving away from short course GCSE entry to full course GCSE entry.
2. The number of entries for the full GCSE course continued to rise significantly. There were 631 candidates in 2007 compared to 413 in 2006 and 365 in 2005. In 2007, two schools entered almost all their students for the full course rather than the short course exam.
3. The number of entries for the short GCSE course continued to drop. There were 677 candidates in 2007, compared to 855 in 2006 and 1002 in 2005.
4. There are three schools that enter relatively few candidates for a GCSE examination.
5. The percentage of students gaining grades in A* - C in the full course GCSE exam in 2007 was 60%, a significant drop from 79% in 2006 and 2005, and significantly below the national % (69%) for the first time.
6. The percentage of students gaining Grades A* - C on the short course GCSE exam in 2007 dropped to 44% from the 51% in 2006 and in line with the 44% in 2005. Standards attained on the short course are below the national average (52%).
7. The percentage of students gaining grades A* - G in the full course GCSE exam in 2007 was 97% a dip from the 100% of 2006 and 2005.
8. The percentage of students gaining grades A* - G in the short course GCSE exam has risen slightly to 95% in 2007 from 94% in 2006 and 93% in 2005.
9. In 2007 the results were variable across Herefordshire schools. Eight schools had a percentage A* - C pass rates significantly above the national average; three schools had a significant drop in the percentage A* - C pass rate and also in their percentage A* - G pass rate. In one of the three schools the results in Religious Studies were significantly below other subjects.
10. In two of the three schools where the percentage A* - C pass and the percentage A* - G pass for the full course GCSE was below average and appeared to have dropped significantly, the change in entry numbers from short to full GCSE exam was also significant. Both schools switched from entering the majority of their students to the full GCSE course exam for the first time. The difference in number was 263 additional candidates from the previous year (2006).
11. One of the three schools had a large entry for the short course and the percentage of A* - C passes dropped significantly in 2007.

In relation to (9) above SACRE noted that while 8 high Schools had performed above average unfortunately 3 had performed significantly below the average and had therefore reduced the overall Herefordshire average. The Children's Services Directorate were already working with 2 of the schools concerned to raise their

attainment levels. However, this work only related to general attainment and not specifically to RE.

SACRE congratulated the Hereford Sixth Form, and particularly John Kyrle High School, on their A Level (A2 and AS levels) attainment. However, SACRE questioned what course provision was offered at other 6th form settings in view of the curriculum requirement for accredited courses to be offered.

It was noted that for the first time in a number of years Whitecross High School would be offering a GCSE course in Religious Studies and therefore course provision was rapidly being put in place.

The Chairman cautioned regarding the interpretation of statistics preferring to consider any trends covering a number of years.

RESOLVED: That the examination results in Religious Studies for 2007 be noted and the Chairman write to John Kyrle High School to congratulate them on their A Level Religious Studies attainment results.

20. ANNUAL PROGRAMME OF INSET 2008

SACRE considered the programme of INSET training for 2008.

The Consultant for RE reported that while two courses had been offered by the Local Authority in 2007, take up of those courses had been extremely poor and therefore the courses had not been run. The Diocese had successfully run a limited number of courses and therefore the Consultant would work in collaboration with the Diocese to offer a limited course programme for 2008.

The Diocesan Director of Education commented that the Diocese were looking to widen the collaborative involvement by working with Worcestershire authorities and Worcestershire University.

With the ever-increasing pressure on schools to provide a broader inclusive curriculum, SACRE hoped that schools, particularly those that had not in the past attended any RE courses, would take up the chance to attend.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

21. SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2007

SACRE received a report on the SACRE Annual Conference 2007.

The Chairman reported that the 2007 SACRE annual Conference had been very successful and thanked Joyce Mackley, Consultant for RE, for all her work in organising the event. He also thanked the pupils and teachers at Wigmore High and Stoke Prior Primary Schools for their excellent presentations.

The Consultant for RE expressed her disappointment that the attendance numbers had been down on previous years. She circulated at the meeting examples of the comments received on the course evaluation sheets, which also indicated a successful event.

The 2007 Conference had been held at Hedley Lodge, Belmont on Thursday 27th September. The aims of the conference had been: to support teachers in the delivery of quality RE and the improvement of pupils achievement; to support the

implementation of the revised 2006 Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus and to bring together all those with an interest in developing RE in Herefordshire for discussion and the sharing of ideas.

The theme of the conference had been to provide teachers with the opportunity of meeting and learning from faith community members from Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, as well as hearing from pupils in two schools, one primary and one secondary, where RE had come alive through the use of imaginative strategies.

All of the workshop leaders had worked with children from Herefordshire schools at the multi-faith event at Holmer school on the two days preceding the conference.

The workshops were on the themes of:

Jewish Education Workshop KS1-2 - Activities involved song, movement, drama and Jewish artefacts linked to the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus for engaging children aged 5-11 in learning about and from Judaism, with a focus on what teachers can do and what children can do. This workshop was run by Jane Silver Corren who is a Jewish educator with 15 year's experience of teaching Judaism in schools and community groups including people with learning difficulties.

Islamic Art Workshop for all key stages - A practical hands on session on Islamic Art. Teachers were able to have a go at Arabic Calligraphy and consider how to make it meaningful in the classroom. The workshop looked at what other schools have done and explored how Art can be used as an inroad to a faith. Razwan Ul Haq, who is an ex-Head and LEA Advisor, ran this workshop. Currently he is working as an Islamic Artist and author of spiritual fiction and non-fiction books on inner meaning of Islam.

Hinduism Workshop - In this workshop teachers were introduced to Hindu personal/family deities and the concept of Karma through the making of Rangoli Patterns. Reference was made to relevant activities used in other schools to help children explore aspects of Hinduism. The workshop was run by Bhartiben Tailor who is a Diversity Consultant and a Hindu Chaplain. She is on the Chaplaincy Steering Group of the Hindu Forum of Britain.

Sikh education workshop - This workshop provided: a personal encounter with oneself, an insight into how a Sikh sees everyday nature as complimenting Sikhism; an encounter with the shabad through classical raag and classical music. It also provided an illustrated guide of Amrit, the transformation from human to superhuman. The workshop was run by Butta Singh who is an RE teacher in Secondary Education and is a practising Sikh who has been in community service with children all his life. His profession aids his Sikh values of empowering young people towards a better life.

SACRE were disappointed that a number of teachers and governors had missed out on a valuable RE resource and opportunity to network with colleagues.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

22. PROPOSALS FOR THE SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008

SACRE considered proposals for a SACRE Annual Conference in 2008.

During consideration of possible themes for the 2008 SACRE conference the following comments were noted:

- Advice on how RE was integral to all aspects of the curriculum e.g. citizenship, behaviour. However, it was suggested that RE should be the driver for other subjects.
- Attractions of teaching RE with Trevor Cooling as a possible key note speaker.
- With constant changes to the curriculum and the inclusion of specific elements the actual teaching of RE, which should already encompass citizenship, ethics, behaviour etc, was being marginalised.
- It may be possible for the students studying Citizenship and Ethics at Whitecross High School to be involved in a presentation.
- The possibility of linking the conference to elements of the Children and Young Peoples Plan could be explored.
- The possibility of linking the conference to elements in the new secondary curriculum – RE, could be explored.
- Professor Terrance Copley, Oxford University, was suggested as a key note speaker.

RESOLVED: That the Consultant for RE consider the suggestions and report to the next meeting.

23. UPDATE ON THE NEW SECONDARY CURRICULUM - RE

SACRE noted the briefing paper contained in the agenda on the New Secondary Curriculum – RE, launched in July 2007.

The Consultant for RE reported that Heads and RE subject leaders had been informed of the regional conference which would be held in Birmingham early in the New Year and, to date, one Head from the County was registered to attend.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

24. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP GUIDANCE 'FINDING TREASURE'

SACRE received an update on progress relating to the Collective Worship guidance 'Finding Treasure'.

SACRE noted that by now around 90% of schools in the County had the guidance and already requests for copies had been received from other authorities. Three training sessions for governors and worship co-ordinators would be held during February/March at Kingsland CE Primary; St Paul's CE Primary and at Whitchurch CE Primary schools which would provide practical help in implementing the guidance. While the guidance had been principally written for primary schools many elements were applicable to the secondary sector.

SACRE further noted that a good degree of positive feed back had been received by the Children's Services Directorate following the distribution of the guidance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**25. DRAFT HEREFORDSHIRE SACRE ANNUAL REPORT - ACADEMIC YEAR
2006/07**

SACRE commented on the draft SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2006 to July 2007 prior to its submission to QCA.

The Democratic Services Officer reported that following the piloting of a new report format earlier in the year no further guidance had been received from QCA and therefore the current report format had been followed. Earlier in the meeting the Religious Education examination results were debated and commentary from the report and debate would be included in the report.

RESOLVED: That subject to the insertion of commentary on the RE examination results and final proof reading the SACRE Annual Report 2006/07 be submitted to QCA.

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 2.00 pm on Monday 3rd March 2008 at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford.

SACRE requested that consideration be given to making the December 2008 meeting slightly earlier in the diary to avoid any clash with school Christmas events.

27. LATE ITEM - NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR SACRE MEMBERS

The Chairman decided to allow this late item on the grounds that due to the date of the conference it would not be expedient to hold a further meeting to consider the item.

The Chairman reported that notice had just been received of a National Conference for SACRE members on the theme of 'Religious education and community cohesion' to be held Thursday 17th January 2008 at Bloomsbury, London.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Brig P Jones CBE attend the conference on behalf of Herefordshire SACRE.

The meeting ended at 4.08 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

SACRE NEWS



Issue 21

JIM KNIGHT'S SPEECH FROM THE LONDON CONFERENCE

I'm delighted to be here today.

The satirist – and Anglican vicar – Jonathan Swift wrote that: “We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.”



If improving religious education three hundred years ago could have helped us love one another and one another's religions, there's all the more reason to do so today.

Because Swift's comment resonates even more loudly in today's globalised society, where people with different faiths and from different cultures live, work and play, side by side, every day, in a way that Swift could never have imagined.

Learning about different religions and cultures should be an essential part of every child's education because it is essential to building a society that is fair and tolerant.

Religious education is important because it helps bring social cohesion.

If young people understand why others wear a turban or a crucifix, eat different foods, have different beliefs and often have the same prophets, they will learn to respect each other and respect diversity.

It is important because without even a basic understanding of religion, you can't possibly understand the history of this country, nor what's happening around the world today.

How could you understand Tudor history, the troubles in Northern Ireland or conflict in the Middle East without knowing what it means to be Protestant and Catholic, or Muslim and Jewish? How could you start to understand how to find peace without the same basic foundations?

It is important because it helps young people's intellectual development.

For many children and young people, religious education will be when they first start to ask the big questions about life, death and purpose. In an era of computer consoles and television, it can be a subject that stretches children and provokes questions about right and wrong.

And it is important because it helps to prepare young people for their adult lives and the world of work.

A doctor or nurse will be hampered in treating patients of different faiths without understanding their core beliefs. To achieve the best results, teachers need to know and understand who they are teaching. And any employer needs to appreciate why religion might mean that some employees might not be able to work at certain times of the day or on certain days of the week.

So religious education will always be an important part of school life.

I know there are worries about how much there is in the curriculum. It's a crowded place. But I want to make it absolutely clear that we do not want religious education to be squeezed out.

In fact, it's great to see that religious studies is more popular than ever before.

It's the third fastest growing subject at GCSE, with more than 170,000 young people taking the full GCSE every year. And they're not just studying the subject; they're also doing well. Last year, more than 71 per cent achieved a higher level GCSE.

This is testament to the work that many of you do to make sure that schools really take the opportunity to provide pupils with engaging and inspirational learning.

Before we introduced the first ever National Framework for religious education in 2004, schools had little guidance and were more or less left to their own devices.

A single sentence saying nothing more than that “any syllabus should reflect the fact that the religious traditions are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain”.

Now though, we have agreement between all of the major faiths to teach children and young people in a way that reflects the country – with inclusion, tolerance, diversity and interfaith dialogue at the heart of children’s learning.

And that has led to many more imaginative approaches to teaching about religion.

At Soar Valley College in Leicester, pupils with Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian and no religious beliefs at all didn’t just study the theory; they all went to a Mosque to observe Muslim practices. And the result was a much deeper, more vivid and real understanding of what happens, as well as a link with the outside community.

Other schools are bringing different communities into their classrooms by taking pupils on virtual tours of mosques, synagogues and even the Vatican.

And linking with schools in different areas by video-conferencing.

This is a credit to you – whether that’s NASACRE and the QCA, the REC, NATRE, AREIAC and all the representatives of the different faith and belief communities here today.

The challenge ahead

But all of that said, we can’t be complacent.

We can’t ignore the conclusion of last year’s HMCI Annual Report.

It agreed that: “at its best religious education equips pupils to consider issues of community cohesion, diversity and religious understanding”

But went on to say: “standards overall are not high enough and there are wide variations in the quality of provision. Achievement by pupils in RE has improved over the past five years but remains very inconsistent.”

We need to make sure that all children and young people can benefit through a much more widespread improvement in the quality of RE teaching and learning. You have a key role to play in making this happen.

We know that where RE is well-taught, local authorities are working with SACREs, drawing on the expertise of SACREs to shape and deliver the right kind of provision within their areas.

Provision such as in Greenwich in South East London where the syllabus now reflects the beliefs and practices of its many Swaminarayan Hindus.

While a few miles north, Haringey’s syllabus now reflects its large Indian Tamil Shaivite community.

It’s your local knowledge which will build a curriculum and encourage ways of teaching that will engage and inspire pupils.

In time, we expect that all local authorities to adopt the National Framework. And we will work with colleagues at the Department for Communities and Local Government to raise the profile of SACREs.

But at the same time we want to work with you all make the current system work more effectively at both a national and local level.

We have already introduced incentives to encourage more of the best graduates to become RE teachers.

Since September 2006, people taking PGCE courses in RE have been entitled to a training bursary worth £9,000 and a “golden hello” of £2,500 after working in a school for a year.

As a result, the number of people achieving qualified teacher status has been growing steadily to well over 500 in the most recent year on record.

And I can today announce a further £1million package of support measures to help spread best practice across the schools and authorities that need to do more to reach the level set by the best.

To help teachers, this money will pay for the creation of new on-line support material, including video case-studies and a toolkit of activities, which will support RE as a subject in the revised secondary curriculum. Schools will be required to follow from this September.

It will also pay for the production of state of the art learning materials on world religions, specifically including help with handling the kinds of issues that pupils are increasingly raising – like 9/11, and the issues of hate crimes and religious fundamentalism.

Importantly, it will also mean we can rationalise and quality assure the many RE teaching resources that are already out there. We know that these vary enormously in quality and appropriateness. And today’s teachers simply don’t have the time to trawl through hundreds of websites and information packs to find the best ones.

And in support of this, we will improve training for RE teachers.

Together with key stakeholders like the Religious Education Council, the National Association of Teachers of RE and Ofsted, we will identify how continuing professional development and initial teacher training can be improved.

To support SACREs themselves, we will use the experience from last year’s successful pilots to improve training and increase the diversity of ethnic minority members.

And we will work with colleagues in other Government Departments, including the Department for Communities and Local Government, to raise the profile of SACREs.

Finally, I can also announce today that we will begin a consultation on updating the current guidance on RE.

I am delighted that the leaders of the main faith groups are supporting what we are doing. We must bring it up to date to include references to the non-statutory framework and to support schools in their new duty to promote community cohesion.

In doing so, we will separate guidance on RE from guidance on collective worship, as the faith and belief communities and RE professionals have asked. We will not review collective worship guidance for now, while we focus on RE. But that is something that we will consider doing in the future.

Conclusion

None of us would be in this room today if we didn’t believe RE was important.

You are the experts and I hope the initiatives and consultations I have announced today will put us on the path to raising the standard of religious education in every school.

