

Herefordshire
Standing Advisory Council on
Religious Education
(SACRE)

Draft SACRE Annual Report for the Academic
Year 2013/14

1 Herefordshire SACRE Annual Report 2013-2014

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 2013-2014. The minutes of these meetings are available from David Penrose, Clerk to SACRE (dpenrose@herefordshire.gov.uk). The strategy group met once, and their report will be presented in the Autumn meeting, 2014.

2 Supporting RE in Herefordshire

The key activities of SACRE over the period 2013-14 have focused on maintaining support for teachers as they embed and build on the revised Agreed Syllabus from 2011.

3 Joint SACRE Primary RE Conference: Herefordshire and Worcestershire SACREs , 23 June 2014

In light of the reduction in financial resources for Herefordshire SACRE, the LA has made links with Worcestershire SACRE and they put on a joint conference. With the venue provided through one of the Herefordshire Councillor's contacts as Governor, thirty seven delegates attended the day conference held at Malvern St James' Girls School. The focus was on good practice, exploring the features of good practice in RE, trying out some resources to use in the classroom and ways of assessing pupils. Workshops included meaningful assessment, ways of enabling pupils to think more deeply in RE, opening key concepts about God and life after death, using stories with 4-7s. Speakers were Lat Blaylock, Fiona Moss and Stephen Pett from RE Today.

Feedback was very encouraging: 87% rated the day as excellent and 13% as good.

The following are a typical sample of teachers' comments:

- *A wonderful day. Everyone was extremely helpful and approachable. Inspiring speakers and workshops. Thank you!*
- *Completely inspired, coming away with several ideas for a variety of religions and age groups. Made links to cross-curricular learning, which was great!*
- *Whole day helped to re-focus the work I will be doing with my school to enhance the teaching and learning of RE and the Christian character of the school*
- *As always a very thought-provoking and interesting day. Practical ideas which I can use in school. I would have liked to have done all 6 workshops. Lovely lunch too!*
- *Brilliant ideas to take back to school as a teacher and co-ordinator. Nice that we were asked about curriculum review too.*

4 Three Counties Secondary Conference: Gloucestershire Herefordshire Worcestershire SACREs, 19 June 2014

This was the first joint secondary conference between the three counties, building on the common support from Stephen Pett of RE Today to each of the SACREs. This enabled the day to be viable, and also led to some excellent and on-going contacts between teachers and schools.

51 delegates attended the conference, from three counties. There were seven delegates from Herefordshire. The focus was on making good progress in RE, balancing inspiration and practicality. The conference offered the opportunity to think through current issues in RE and to try out a host of ready-to-use classroom resources. Sessions included looking at assessment without levels, opening up art and texts in the classroom, balancing knowledge and skills through promoting enquiry, in the light of the latest research in neuroscience, psychology and education. Keynote speakers and workshop leaders were Lat Blaylock and Stephen Pett, from RE Today, with Julie Haigh and Laura Arstall, RE teachers at Stroud High School

As usual, feedback was very encouraging: 95% rated the day as excellent and 5% as good. Typical comments include:

- *Lots of great ideas and resources as always. Super value for money. A 'must-do' CPD.*
- *Session on art and texts was very useful with lots of interesting ideas I will implement in my teaching*
- *Thank you!! So much to take away and so many brain cells firing (even so close to the end of term!) Love the deeper thinking stuff especially.*
- *Practical, useful, thought provoking. Thank you.*
- *Lots of creative ideas, particularly use of frames, Job for suffering and use of imagery, very engaging! Great range of resource available for purchase.*
- *Really informative, variety of information, felt welcomed, useful to use within dept inset. Thank you for a great day.*
- *Varied and engaging.*
- *Great to re-new links with colleagues. Good resource which will be useful and make an impact in lessons.*
- *Very inspirational as always – so many super resources. Can't wait to use them and inspire others back in school with ideas.*

5 Three Counties Special School RE Day: Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire SACREs, 29 April 2014

This was the second of our RE day conferences for special schools. Following the successful day with Anne Krisman in October 2010, this day followed up on planning creative RE for special pupils with a wide range of needs. The programme included a session on responding to Ofsted's demands for RE with purpose; one session on expressing concepts creatively, using a range of examples, and one on promoting Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development across the special school. Worcestershire SACRE's Tibetan Buddhist member, Ani-la Choesang, introduced a session on movement in meditation – for those pupils who cannot sit still; and demonstrated ways of creating Buddhist prayer flags.

The day was led by Anne Krisman, subject leader of RE at Little Heath School, Romford, Essex, an experienced teacher in a variety of special schools, writer on RE and special needs, and winner of the 2011 Hockerill/National Association of Teachers of RE Award for Innovation in RE.

This was a well-received day, albeit with disappointingly low numbers. Teachers were enthusiastic about the practical focus of the day as well as the specialist expertise offered by Anne.

6 Commentary on exam results summer 2014

The number of entries for full course GCSE RE was 734 compared to 706 in 2013. Herefordshire consistently enters more learners for full course GCSE RE than the national average.

Of this year's full course GCSE entries, 76.0% achieved grade C or above, compared to 69.5% nationally. In Herefordshire 99.0% of learners gained grade G or above, compared to 97.8 nationally.

The short course saw a reduction from 445 entries in 2013 to 260 in 2014. This is the lowest number of entries Herefordshire has seen in the past 5 years. Of these, 48.5% achieved grade C or better, slightly lower than the previous year's attainment of 51.2%. However, the A* to G indicator rose to 98.5%.

Whitecross High School and Sixth Form College was the only mainstream secondary school to enter learners for the Entry Level Qualification Band C in 2014. 100% of learners achieved level 1 or 2 qualifications.

7 Quality of teaching in Herefordshire.

All schools are committed to developing the spiritual moral, social and cultural (SMSC) aspects of learners' education. Whilst this may not be a measurable aspect of school life, Ofsted's inspection teams are required to consider the impact of a school's SMSC provision as part of the judgement of a school's leadership and management.

To date, Herefordshire has been judged as having 80.0% of its schools to be Good or better by Ofsted. Due to the interrelationship between leadership and management and the judgement for overall effectiveness, it can be assumed that the quality of SMSC is good or better.

8 Future support for RE

On-going support for teachers, developing their ability to plan, using the agreed syllabus planning steps, and for improving teaching and learning in RE, is planned for 2014-2015, including:

- Annual SACRE conference for primary teachers, focusing on planning and assessment, in partnership with Gloucestershire SACRE.
- Annual SACRE secondary conference, in partnership with Herefordshire SACRE, focusing on assessment in the light of Government policy to remove the use of levels.
- Network meetings

9 Other matters:

SACRE considered several pertinent issues over the year, including:

- The impact of wide-ranging cuts to the Council and the implications for how much support SACRE can realistically offer to schools
- The National Curriculum Framework for Religious Education (NCFRE) October 2013 and its implications for Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus.
- The exam results for GCSE (full and short course), AS and A-level Religious Studies in Herefordshire, in relation to continuing discussion on the impact of Government policy on the provision of RE, including the English Baccalaureate and Mr Gove's comments on not doing enough to protect RE.
- The Strategy Group met on 7 July 2014 and focused on the possibilities for reviewing the agreed syllabus for 2016 – 2021, in the light of the current financial strictures. It examined the extent to which the current syllabus meets the requirements of the NCFRE, where new work would need to be done (for example, on assessment without levels), and made recommendations for SACRE to consider in its Autumn 2014 meeting about ways forward.

Cllr John Stone
Chair of SACRE
November 2014



Religious Studies –
performance in Heref