

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

**Draft SACRE Annual Report for the Academic
Year 2014/15**

Chairman's Foreword

I am grateful to Stephen Pett and Bonnie Griffiths for their support and advice during the year and in particular for all the work carried out by Stephen Pett in preparing the new Agreed Syllabus. It will be good to be working more closely with Worcestershire SACRE now that we are following the same syllabus and teachers from our two counties will have more opportunities to meet. Finally, I want to thank all our Herefordshire RE teachers for their hard work during the year and giving RE the high profile it deserves in our schools. We must never lose sight of the importance of RE in our changing world, however limited our resources

1 Herefordshire SACRE Annual Report 2014-2015

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.

SACRE were grateful for the support of Bonnie Griffiths during 2014-2015, School Improvement Advisor, who was the LA officer on SACRE.

Herefordshire SACRE met twice in 2014-2015. The minutes of these meetings are available from David Penrose, Clerk to SACRE (dpenrose@herefordshire.gov.uk).

2 Supporting RE in Herefordshire

The key activities of SACRE over the period 2014-15 have focused on maintaining support for teachers through the development of a revised agreed syllabus for RE, launched in summer 2015. The SACRE meeting in November 2014 made the decision to bring forward the review of the agreed syllabus to 2015 instead of the expected 2016 renewal date. This was in the light of the changes to the National Curriculum and the parallel Review of Religious Education produced by the RE Council of England and Wales in October 2013, and the national move to remove assessment levels.

SACRE opted to purchase the 'model' syllabus from RE Today Services. The advantages of this are that it was being developed through 2014-2015, allowing Herefordshire SACRE and Herefordshire teachers some input into its development; Worcestershire SACRE have also opted for this syllabus, allowing the possibility of cross-county CPD, increasing the options for teachers to attend network meetings and conferences.

The 2016 syllabus builds on the 2006-2011 syllabus by making use of key questions, constructed around the broad strands of 'Believing, Expressing, Living' that is at the heart of the 2011 syllabus, and following 'threads' of questions through the year groups, as a form of spiral curriculum. It offers a clear planning process to support teachers in developing excellent RE, making use of the unit outlines. These outlines give helpful recommended content for each key question, as well as clear outcomes, banded as 'emerging, expected and exceeding' to reflect the current move towards 'mastery' learning and assessment. The individual unit outcomes build towards end of key stage outcomes derived from the RE Council's 2013 *Curriculum Framework for RE in England*, offering the best available nationally comparable measure of achievement.

The syllabus offers both systematic and thematic units of study, and is flexible in its approach to assessment, allowing schools to use their own methods in relation to assessing progress towards the end of key stage outcomes.

SACRE commented on the draft syllabus in the March meeting, offered guidance on the introductory pages, and the Chair provided the Foreword. The syllabus was printed and launched in the summer term, with schools who were unable to attend receiving a copy in the post, with an accompanying letter from the School Improvement Advisor.

3 SACRE Primary RE Conference to introduce the new Agreed Syllabus: 2 June 2015

Introducing the new Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus 2015: Whitecross School, Hereford.

67 delegates attended the primary launch conference at Whitecross School. 56 feedback forms were received and 80% of those rated the conference as excellent, and 20% as good.

The conference was delivered by Stephen Pett and Fiona Moss from RE Today Services. Session one was on 'Planning great RE using the new syllabus', offering an introduction to the changes and supporting teachers to make sense of how to use it effectively. The second session focused on ideas and strategies for excellent teaching and learning that unpack the unit questions, and the afternoon session looked at how to support pupils in making progress in RE.

Comments from head teachers, teachers and other delegates about the value of the conference included:

- Great, thanks. Loved the two people delivering it
- Always a delight to spend an entire day on RE!
- Very informative and useful as RE co-ordinator
- Lots to take in but clearly presented. Like the way staging planning was suggested. Suggesting activities relating to the key questions was very useful – really enjoyed KS1 story lesson.
- Great resources and examples of teaching activities
- Well organised and a very good venue. Plenty of space and breaks and interesting sessions. Timing worked well too.
- Always good to spend time devoted to one (of many) subjects. Good to network too. Good resources provided.

Teachers also commented on their initial response to the new syllabus:

- Looks simple and easy to use. We are excited about delivering it.
- I really like it! Think it is easy to use and will be easier to implement, particularly splitting lower and upper KS2.
- Clearly laid out; like the way key questions are related to learning outcomes/suggested content. As an early years teacher I like the terminology used for assessment
- Detailed and clearly laid out – love the colour coding. Glad to see principal religions mapped to different year groups.
- Appears to be simplified and straightforward but at the same time allows for more depth to be studied in each section.
- Well thought through – logical and accessible.

Many teachers commented on how they were planning to implement the syllabus in their schools. They also suggested ideas for future support, prominent among which was the desire for a county list of contacts from within faith communities, for visits to school and to places of worship.

SACRE are grateful to Whitecross Hereford High School for hosting the conference.

4 Secondary RE Conference: 15 June 2015

Introducing the new Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus 2015: Whitecross School, Hereford

12 delegates attended, and 92% of these rated the day excellent, and 8% as good. Sessions introduced the syllabus and explored its implications for planning at KS3 and supporting learning at KS4, looking at methods of assessment after the removal of levels, and trying out some teaching and learning ideas.

Teachers commented on the value of the conference:

- Thank you – very helpful and informative use of lesson ideas
- It's always good to get together with other RE teachers to share ideas. The teaching resources are excellent and it is useful to actually take part in the activities
- I enjoyed the session regarding taxonomies
- Very well run/presented by Stephen

Their feedback on the revised syllabus included the following comments:

- Helpful to see the overview and changes
- Excellent – like the assessment system
- The syllabus is 'user-friendly', the new questions are interesting and will engage students. It will be good to see the resources when they go online.
- I think that the revised learning outcomes are excellent
- Nice to see modern content
- Excellent syllabus – makes sense
- Key questions have greater clarity for a non-specialist!

Once again, SACRE are grateful to Whitecross Hereford High School for hosting the conference.

6 Commentary on exam results summer 2014

[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 2015-2016 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 2015-2016, including:

- 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, focusing on supporting pupils in deepening their understanding of religion, in preparation for the revised GCSE specifications, and 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:

- The on-going impact of wide-ranging cuts to the Council and the implications for how much support SACRE can realistically offer to schools
- The national consultation on reform of GCSE and A-level Religious Studies.
- 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. SACRE considered the proposed reform to GCSE and A-level Religious Studies, and members of SACRE contributed to the national consultation on this.

Cllr John Stone
Chair of SACRE
November 2015