

A Vision for Herefordshire SACRE 2021

SACRE is not just a legal requirement forced upon authorities. It is not something that the local authorities bear with a grudge and just about meet the requirements because it is the law. It is about supporting our teachers and pupils in our Country. It is about helping to educate our pupils in the cultural differences of this diverse nation and enable them to be able to take their place in the world as rounded free-thinking individuals that make informed choices in their lives

Beside our statutory directive of agreeing the Religious Education (RE) syllabus for schools within our county and compiling various reports it is the role of an effective and supportive SACRE to:-

- visit schools and share our faiths with pupils.
- To meet the children on many levels whether it be for prayers - for classroom workshops, or as qualified teachers of our subject
- To hold pupil conferences to enable them to discuss comparative religion in a mature way and in a safe and enquiring environment
- To hold conferences to impart the syllabus to teachers and give them ideas on content for exciting RE in their classrooms
- To share ideas with teachers on how they can incorporate RE into any of their other classes, underpinning much of their teaching. Not in an evangelical way but in a way that reinforces sound ethics.
- To encourage a platform for teachers of RE to share different ideas so that they may fulfil the social, moral and culturally diverse content within RE, in a motivated and interesting way

It is common for a proactive and effective SACRE to offer all this within their county.

When we look at what SACREs receive as funding from their councils it ranges from £96,000 per annum to a sorry few that refuse to support their SACREs at all. Within this graph we, sadly we are very near the bottom.

We have been underfunded for many year`s and it is time to start to redress this balance in an acceptable timeframe for us within SACRE, in order that we can improve and progress with an agreed way forward.

Herefordshire is not as diverse religiously as some of our neighbouring counties and 'other faiths' outside of Christianity do not have their churches and church leaders resident in the county. There is a large Buddhist establishment south of the county but apart from that those of faith have to congregate in secular halls. This means that there is no established community that feels connected to the county and those practising 'other faiths' tend to go back to their wider family groups at the weekends and practice in the mosques, gurdwaras etc in Worcester, Birmingham and Coventry.

For this reason, I feel that we need to work harder at offering faith involvement in schools. It is our duty to ensure that every child leaving school has an understanding of the diversity of all those living within the UK

Going Forward

There are four things that I want to see happen through our SACRE over the coming two/three years.

We need some training.

It is my proposal that we re-join NASACRE
NASACRE fees are about £120 per annum
NASACRE have also recently started a much-needed training programme which, while some are free, some will cost £20 - £30 per person. I would like to propose that we re-join NASACRE and take part in their training programme for SACRE members, in order that we are prepared and trained for when it is safe to return to school visits.

Secondary Schools Conference

That biennially we hold a conference, in the Autumn term, for 14-16 year olds. This would consist of workshops in the morning, possibly delivered by RE Today and a comparative religion debate in the afternoon, attended by faith representatives.

Primary Schools RE and Cultural involvement

To hold a day with representation from faiths within the county. To be held on a Saturday when children can invite their parents to take part throughout the day. Each faith/cultural group to offer a snippet of their faith and how they practice their faiths - through music and dance, food and role play worship with full children participation.

To increase tolerance of all religions we have held pupil workshop days at Secondary level but I feel that some family involvement at a younger level could help foster a wider understanding and acceptance.

I propose that this is tried on a small scale June 2022 and a full involvement day to be held at Bluecoat school in the summer of 2023.

When we can gauge the level of success perhaps this can be held biennially, or every three years.

Meeting other schools at Secondary level

In Herefordshire we used to visit / be visited by pupils from a Muslim school in Birmingham. A very proactive day of workshops held with the children mixing and working closely together. This fostered a greater understanding of each other's lives, was very well received and appreciated by teachers and pupils.

*Prepared by Venerable Tenzin Choesang
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