



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

**Date** Thursday 3 November 2016  
**Time** 1.30 pm  
**Venue** Committee Room 1B, County Hall, Durham

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend.  
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's  
agreement.**

1. Introductions, Welcome and Apologies
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2016 (Pages 1 - 4)
3. Declarations of interest, if any
4. Matters Arising
5. Chairs Comments
6. Agreed Syllabus Review
7. RE Inspector Report (Pages 5 - 8)
8. NASACRE Proposed Constitution 2016 (Pages 9 - 12)
9. Discussion Item 1: SACRE members as an active resource
10. Discussion Item 2: SACRE response to the Commission on Religious Education
11. Date of the next meeting
12. Any other business
13. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information

**Colette Longbottom**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham

26 October 2016

To: **The Members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**1. Church of England**

N Chapman, Revd D Lindley, K Passmore, R Sansom and P Snowden

**2. Other Religious Denominations and Faiths**

J Bainbridge	- Methodist Church
S Brown	- Assemblies of God
G Chaundy	- The Salvation Army
V Gallant	- Judaism
W Gray	- Buddhism
B Guymer	- Baptist Church
J Kidd	- Methodist Church
J Nicholls	- Society of Friends (Quaker)
I Osborne	- Roman Catholic
J Pallister	- Roman Catholic
S Purba	- Sikhism
Bhakti Rasa Dasa	- Hinduism
C Spencer	- Bahá'í Faith
M Stephenson	- United Reform Church
M Turner	- Islam

**3. Teachers Associations**

V Bain	- NUT
S Baker	- NUT
A Hartley	- NASUWT
P Lamb	- SHA
S Lupton	- RE Curriculum Group
P Welch	- NUT
C Newton	- RE Curriculum Group

**4. County Council Representatives**

Councillors P Brookes, M Dixon, A Liversidge and W Stelling

**Specialist Inspector (Religious Education)**

Isobel Short

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Contact: Paula Nicholson

Tel: 03000 269710

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**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on Thursday 9 June 2016 at 1.30 pm**

**Present:**

**P Welch (Chairman) In the Chair**

**Church of England**

N Chapman and R Sansom

**Other Religious Denominations and Faiths**

J Bainbridge	- Methodist Church
V Gallant	- Judaism
J Nicholls	- Society of Friends (Quaker)
I Osborne	- Roman Catholic
J Pallister	- Roman Catholic
C Spencer	- Bahá'í Faith
M Stephenson	- United Reform Church
M Turner	- Islam

**Teachers Associations**

V Bain	- NUT
S Lupton	- RE Curriculum Group
C Newton	- RE Curriculum Group

**County Council Representatives**

Councillors P Brookes, M Dixon and A Liversidge

**Specialist Inspector (Religious Education)**

Isobel Short

**Voluntary and Community Sector Officer**

Ian Hunter Smart

**1 Introductions, Welcome and Apologies**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for absence had been received from S Baker, W Gray, A Hartley, J Kidd and K Passmore.

## **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2016, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the items of business on the agenda.

## **4 Matters Arising**

Councillor Dixon referred to Minute No. 4 and indicated that there had been a change in the Membership of the County Council Representatives.

The Chairman indicated that he had met with the Specialist Inspector for Religious Education prior to the meeting and they had evaluated the new meeting style and agreed to continue with the discussion element as an agenda item, as they felt it had worked well.

## **5 Chairs Comments**

The Chairman referred to the 'White Paper – Every School an Academy', which was to form legislation to make all schools become academies. He reported that the government had decided not to go ahead with this legislation but the idea and concept of academisation was still a big issue with the Department of Education and if schools became academies where would that leave the role and functioning of SACRE, they needed to be aware of the impact of academies.

Members briefly discussed the issues before the Chairman suggested that this could be a discussion item for the next meeting.

## **6 RE Inspector Report**

Members considered the report of the Specialist Inspector for Religious Education which was the RE Inspector Report for the Summer Term 2016 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The report looked at the following:-

- RE Networks
- GCSE Conference
- New GCSEs in Religious Studies
- Contribution of RE to British Values
- Local Partnerships
- RE Hub
- Withdrawn of RE and Collective Worship
- RE, Academies, Free Schools, White Paper and all that
- KS3 Unit – What Do Christians Believe?

Members discussed the contents of the report.

J Bainbridge sought clarification if RE networks still took place in schools. The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education responded that they did not have networks in schools anymore and a central network is held at Durham Leadership Centre in school time each term. This has resulted in an increase in the number of attendees.

C Spencer sought clarification on withdrawal from Religious Education and Collective Worship and if parents withdrew their child would any siblings automatically be withdrawn. The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education responded that her advice would always be not to assume that parents will withdraw all children in the family from Religious Education and/or collective worship.

I Hunter-Smart sought clarification on the terminology of Religious Education and Religious Studies. The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education responded that Religious Education was statutory for all pupils. Religious Education involves knowledge and understanding of religions, critical thinking and reflection. It is therefore both academic in its approach to the study of religion but also gives opportunity for spiritual moral, social and cultural development of the child. The phrase Religious Studies refers to the externally accredited academic qualification e.g. GCSE and advanced level.

This is not compulsory. This is an academic approach to the study of religion and does not involve personal or spiritual reflection in the same way.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **7 Presentation on Islamophobia across County Durham**

The Chairman welcomed Mr G McArdle, Community Safety Co-Ordinator who was in attendance to talk to Members on Islamophobia across County Durham.

He advised Members that his role was to monitor tensions in communities and report to the Department for Community and Local Government.

He provided Members with details of various active groups across County Durham who were anti Islam. He also provided Members with details of his preventative role in schools and talked about work being undertaken by the County Council to promote social cohesion including advising schools.

The Chairman thanked Mr G McArdle for his attendance and the valuable and useful information he had provided.

## **8 Discussion Item 1: Teaching Assistants and Religious Education**

The Chairman asked Members to divide into two groups and for each group to discuss one of the discussion topics which were 'Teaching Assistants and Religious Education' and 'Islam in Schools'.

Councillor Brookes chaired the discussion group on 'Teaching Assistants and Religious Education'. He indicated that the Specialist Inspector for Religious Education had provided Members with some background information including the fact that Teaching Assistants often teach Religious Education when teachers have time away from the classroom to prepare and mark. Members expressed concern about the perception of Religious Education in schools as a result of this.

Members discussed if there was a difference between church schools and other schools and one Member who had worked in a church school indicated that Religious Education was not always taught by a teacher in church schools.

Various issues were discussed including a lack of specialist knowledge of Religious Education in Primary School and the perception of religion in society and the media. It was suggested that Durham Agreed Syllabus could be showed more widely to help various stake holders have a better understanding of Religious Education.

## **9 Discussion Item 2: Islam in Schools**

Following the group discussion on 'Islam in Schools', the Chairman indicated that they had discussed the right of withdrawal from Religious Education and/or collective worship and the fact that no other subject had this right with the exception of sexual education. Members were fully aware of the legislation which is sometimes being used to withdraw pupils from aspects of Religious Education.

The group discussed organising an interfaith event for schools where pupils could meet faith members. Members suggested that the event could also be used as a model for schools to set up similar events in schools. It was felt that whilst Islamophobia is a specific problem the need for pupils to encounter members of all faiths would be more inclusive but the theme could be based around overcoming religious prejudice.

It was suggested that a working group be set up to look at organising an interfaith event.

Members asked if parental withdrawal was predominantly concerned with the teaching about Islam. The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education responded that she receives many queries from parents and schools about the right of withdrawal with wide ranging reasons given. This does include Islam but many other reasons also.

## **10 Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of SACRE would be held on 3 November 2016.

# RE MATTERS

## The RE Adviser Report

### November 2016

#### RE Networks (Autumn term)

##### Secondary Schools

- **Talking Secondary RE**, Held on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September, DLC, 4 – 5.30pm. This is an informal network where ideas and queries can be shared.
- **RE Leaders**, Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November, DLC, 1.30 – 4.30pm. Agenda items will include review of outcomes at KS4, supporting the more able in RE, local and national news, sharing good RE resources, encounter and engagement with local faith communities.

##### Special Schools

- Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, DLC, 2 – 4pm

##### Primary Schools

- **RE Co-ordinators**. Held on 13<sup>th</sup> October at DLC, 1 – 4pm. 30 delegates attended. Agenda items included writing an RE policy, a whole school approach to teaching about Christmas, leading RE in your school.
- **Talking Primary RE**, Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November, DLC, 4 – 5.30pm.

#### What is the meaning of Christmas?

Our Agreed Syllabus plans for continuity and progression between and across key stages. The Syllabus recommends that each year group in primary schools focuses on a different question to help pupils explore how and why Christians celebrate Christmas:

- Reception: How is Christmas a special time?
- Year 1: Why are gifts given at Christmas?
- Year 2: Why is light important at Christmas?
- Year 3: How and why is Advent important to Christians?
- Year 4: Why do Christians call Jesus the light of the world?
- Year 5: What are the themes of Christmas?
- Year 6: What do the gospel stories tell us about the birth of Jesus?

The RE Adviser has produced planning materials to support this work including suggestions of creative activities and a whole school presentation assembly led by the Headteacher. These materials are available to schools and are on Durham's Learning Platform.

It would be interesting to hear from any secondary colleagues who would like to build on this work through the development of a short unit in Key Stage 3.

## Agreed Syllabus Review

As indicated in previous newsletters, the review of Durham Agreed Syllabus must begin early in 2017. The whole review including legal process takes some time. It is anticipated that the Agreed Syllabus will be launched to schools in 2018.

## Interfaith Week

The annual Interfaith Week for England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland takes place from 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

The three aims of the week are:

- 1) Strengthening good inter faith relations at all levels
- 2) Increasing awareness of the different and distinct inter faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- 3) Increasing understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs.

There is a website which contains information, resources and ideas for different organisations (including schools).

The website will also give some information about any local events taking place in Interfaith Week.

[www.interfaithweek.org](http://www.interfaithweek.org)

The RE Adviser has informed schools that Durham SACRE would be very interested to hear about any school activities that take place to mark Interfaith Week. These could be shared across schools so that ideas and resources can be built up for future years.

## Mutual Respect and Tolerance of Other Faiths and Beliefs

All schools are required to actively promote fundamental British values (as set down by government). They form part of a school provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The fundamental British values are identified as:

- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Individual freedom
- Mutual respect and tolerance for other faiths and beliefs

Active promotion must be about enabling pupils to develop positive attitudes and behaviours; it is not just about teaching pupils what the British values are.

The RE Adviser has produced some guidance for schools on the values of mutual respect and tolerance for other faiths and beliefs. She has advised that what is really vital is that pupils are given opportunities to **encounter and engage** with people from a wide variety of faiths and non-religious beliefs. By doing this pupils have the chance to counter any stereotypical views they (or others may) have, appreciate diversity at first hand and develop positive relationships with others. This British value should obviously be promoted in RE but also across the whole of school life.

Durham SACRE can support this work by being an active resource for schools where possible. With this in mind SACRE members have been invited to fill in a questionnaire about their beliefs and views. The information will be shared with pupils in school so that they can appreciate and understand the importance and relevance of religious and non-religious beliefs in local people's lives.

## RE Conference

**When?** Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017

**Where?** Durham Leadership Centre

**Who for?** RE teachers (primary and secondary) plus two Year 5/6 or Year 7/8 pupils per school.

**What?** Teachers and pupils will meet people from a variety of religious and non-religious communities, ask questions and explore the impact of beliefs on people today. There will be a Question Time Panel and an opportunity to think about diversity of beliefs in our world today.

### Why?

The Conference aims to help pupils learn about and understand religious diversity and develop and extend important skills and attitudes.

The Conference aims to help teachers plan for a similar event in their own school.

Teachers and pupils will work together to consider how to share the day with other pupils in school and develop similar work in their school in the future.

## Contracts

The RE Adviser continues to support schools in their provision for RE. She is currently working with several primary and secondary schools e.g. in planning their curriculum provision for RE, aspects of leadership in RE.

## Rise in Entries for GCSE Religious Studies

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) reported this summer that the number of entries for full course GCSE was at its highest since 2002. There were 284, 057 entries, up 0.1% on 2015. The REC applaud this

increase, achieved in spite of the fact that RS GCSE is not included in the English Baccalaureate school performance measure.

*“This means that the increase in entries has been due to the popularity of the subject with the pupils and the desirability of the qualification, rather than as a response to incentives created by government policy”.*

This may be the case but may not be the only interpretation. Whilst it is true that more students may be taking RS GCSE as one of their optional subjects (students often get to opt for 2 or 3 GCSEs to study as well as the ones they must study), it could also be the case that the increase could be partially due to many more schools using the core RE time (statutory RE time) to teach Full Course GCSE rather than Short Course. This is because a Full Course can count towards a school's performance measures (called Best 8 and Progress 8) whereas a Short Course does not. The GCSE qualification is therefore being taught in restricted time compared to other GCSE subjects. This creates huge pressure on students and teachers alike and is not good for the subject.

The REC also reports that the number of students entered for Short Course (this has been very popular over recent years) has significantly decreased with 17.7% fewer entries than in 2015. Numbers of entries in England have fallen to 53, 093 in 2016 from 254, 698 in 2010. The REC are dismayed by this decline stating that there are now 100,000 fewer pupils in England taking a GCSE (full or short) in RS than there were in 2010, a decline of 23.6% in six years. They are very concerned that increasingly all students are not being 'given the opportunity to study Religious Education at Key Stage 4' and that 'a growing number of schools seem to be failing in their duty to provide this entitlement to their students'.

The point the REC make is valid and is indeed worrying. However, entry data for external qualifications in RS do not necessarily tell us the whole picture. It could be that in some schools core RE is still part of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 but students are no longer entered for an examination. Some schools may be devising their own RE Key Stage 4 curriculum to take more account of the changing religious landscape and the context in which the school sits. They may not be following or entering students for an externally accredited course but that does not mean that good relevant RE does not take place. Indeed, the demand for this type of course is growing with our local schools – a point for consideration in the revision of Durham Agreed Syllabus.

What is more worrying than the type of RE curriculum being offered is whether RE is being offered at all at Key Stage 4. It is indeed the case that in some schools RE has just about disappeared off the timetable in Years 10 and 11 to make way for other accredited courses. This not only fails to meet statutory requirements but impacts on the entitlement of students to have space to think about the issues and ideas raised through the inclusion of Religious Education on their timetable, a key part of students' own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The debate really here is about what makes good RE at Key Stage 4 and can this only be understood in terms of an academic qualification? How can schools provide for all their students in this educational changing landscape so that :

- All students receive their statutory entitlement to good relevant RE at Key Stage 4 which challenges their thinking and provides for good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Students have the opportunity to study religions in an academic and rigorous way and gain a qualification if they wish.

What is certain is that government policy has a huge impact on curriculum provision in schools and this in turn has a massive impact on RE provision. The RE Adviser continues to advise RE leaders and senior leaders to think carefully about the issues and, if appropriate, re-examine their RE provision to meet the needs and entitlement of students, school needs and statutory requirements. The guidance paper, 'RE at Key Stage 4 and the New GCSEs', sets out various alternatives for RE provision at Key Stage 4. It is available to schools on Durham's Learning Platform.

# Proposed constitution 2016

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Below is the proposed constitution to be discussed at the 2016 AGM. The current constitution page can be found from the menu on the left.

## **1. The Name of the Association:**

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The name of the Association shall be the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE).

## **2. The Aims of the Association:**

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The aims of the Association shall be:

2.1 To assist the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) to fulfil their responsibilities

2.2 To represent their common concerns to other bodies

2.3 To assist in the training and mutual consultation of SACRE members

2.4 To encourage the development of SACREs

2.5 To undertake such other activities, appropriate to SACREs, as may benefit RE and collective worship

## **3. Basis of membership and duties:**

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3.1 Each SACRE shall be invited to join the Association, membership being renewable annually on payment of the annual subscription in place at that time. These member SACREs constitute the Council.

3.2 The Council shall meet at least once annually; this meeting shall be known as the Annual General Meeting (AGM). It will be deemed to be quorate when one quarter of member SACREs is represented.

3.3 Each member SACRE shall be entitled to send any number of representatives to the meetings of the Council, but on any matter on which the Council takes a vote, each member SACRE shall be entitled to cast one vote only.

3.4 The Council shall be responsible for review and amendment of the Constitution, as appropriate.

3.5 A majority of one half plus one of the Council shall be necessary for any amendment to the Constitution.

## **4. The Honorary Officers:**

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Honorary Officers shall be nominated by a SACRE and must be an officer to, or a member or co-opted member of, that SACRE.

These shall be elected for a period of two years and shall comprise:

4.1 The Chair

4.2 The Vice Chair

4.3 The Assistant to the Chair

4.4 The Secretary

4.5 The Treasurer

The Vice Chair / Chair / Assistant to the Chair is a 6 year term of office with 2 years in each Officer role, the Vice Chair being elected to automatically move into the next role after two years. At any one time, 3 officers will be on the Executive at different stages of these roles. If at any time, one of these Officers is unable to continue, the Executive may appoint a temporary substitute from the other two post holders until the next AGM, when the position will be regularised.

An Honorary Officer may relinquish their office at any time. If an Honorary Officer is absent from three consecutive Committee meetings they shall be deemed to have relinquished their office and would need to seek re-election at the next Council AGM if they so desired.

## **5. The Executive Committee (the Committee):**

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Committee members shall be nominated by a SACRE and must be an officer to, or a member or co-opted member of, that SACRE. Similarly, a person co-opted by the Committee would normally be an officer to a SACRE or a member of a SACRE, but in some cases their specific area of expertise might be deemed more significant than the aforementioned criteria.

The Committee shall comprise the elected Honorary Officers together with no more than eight other members elected by the Council. The Committee shall have the power to co-opt up to three additional members. The Committee shall include the following:

5.1 The Assistant to the Chair who shall be the previous Chair and shall assist for a period of two years

5.2 A Membership Secretary who shall monitor the membership, keep up to date records and work with the Treasurer to ensure members have paid their fees on time

5.3 A Communications Officer who shall have oversight of the Association's communications strategy and communications, including the NASACRE briefings sent to member SACREs

5.4 A Conference Organiser who shall have oversight of the Annual Conference in partnership with the Secretary and the Treasurer

5.5 A Development Officer who shall oversee the production of a development plan and report to the Executive and Council on its progress

With the agreement of the Committee, the roles set out in 5.1 – 5.5 may be shared between members of the Committee. Members of the Committee shall serve for a period of three years, at which time they must seek re-election by the Council at the appropriate AGM. Normally, members of the Executive Committee should not serve more than six years consecutively. Co-opted members shall normally serve for two years when a review by the Committee will take place; they may serve as a co-opted member for up to six years consecutively.

If a member of the Committee misses three consecutive Committee meetings they shall be deemed to have left the Committee.

The Committee shall be responsible for the planning of other activities and events in fulfilment of the aims of the Association.

## **6. Subscriptions and Finance:**

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There shall be a membership fee, which shall be fixed from time to time by the Council. This fee shall not be deemed as the payment for the Annual Conference for that part of the Conference that is not the Council.

## **7. Winding-up:**

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If for any reason the Association were to be dissolved, any assets remaining in the Association's bank account(s) shall be divided equally between those SACREs which were members at the time of the dissolution of the Association, once all other debts outstanding had been cleared.

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