

DURHAM SACRE - NOVEMBER 2011 NATIONAL UPDATES

RE and English Baccalaureate

You will no doubt be aware that despite a very good national campaign by members of the RE community, it was announced on July 20th that RE would definitely not be included in the English Baccalaureate. This is very disappointing and is having an impact for many of our RE departments across County Durham.

Whilst we do not have the outcome we most wanted, the profile of RE has been raised; the Department for Education are maintaining the position that RE is compulsory and that schools should continue to meet this statutory duty. The Prime Minister has said that the English Baccalaureate will be regularly reviewed and consideration will be given to the inclusion of RE in the future.

Some teachers have heard that the Government may abolish short course which would obviously have an impact for many RE departments who offer GCSE short course RE at Key Stage 4. No announcements have been made to confirm this rumour. There will be a general review of qualifications in 2012.

- ❖ Should SACRE continue to contact MPs and Department for Education to express their ongoing concern about RE at Key Stage 4 and the consequences of E. Bacc for RE?

SACRE and Academies

Several schools in County Durham are now academies and are therefore no longer under Local Authority control. This means that SACRE no longer has a role to monitor RE in these schools or advise the Local Authority about RE in them. These schools will therefore not receive the letter about Key Stage 4 standards that we normally send at the end of the Autumn Term.

- ❖ Should SACRE still maintain contact with these schools and offer their service and support?

Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural Development

In the current Ofsted evaluation schedule for schools, inspectors are required to give a judgement on the effectiveness in which students are spiritually, morally, socially and culturally developed through school (classed as one of the outcomes judgements). Whilst this judgement is not exclusively based on RE and collective worship inspectors do consider the contribution they make when considering evidence for reaching their judgement. From January 2012 there will be a new evaluation schedule. SMSC remains part of this although there will no longer be a specific outcomes judgement. I am attending training on the new evaluation schedule in December and will brief SACRE further after this.

LOCAL UPDATES

SACRE Inter-Faith Conference

The SACRE Task Group has discussed the possibility of holding another Inter Faith Conference in Spring 2012, with the possibility of involving more students through the use of skype and video conferencing. No decision has yet been made as to whether this will go ahead.

SACRE Vodcasts

Following on from the success of the vodcast on the importance of RE, we have secured some more funding to produce a small series of films to be used in our Durham schools. Gayle Hackett is willing to work on these again and I will be meeting with her shortly so that we can discuss details. The main idea of these films would be for students to hear the beliefs and views of a variety of faith members on a variety of issues. It is likely that we will be asking again for SACRE volunteers to be interviewed. I will keep you posted but please support this work; this is really helping our students in schools to engage with the reality of faith (and non-faith) perspectives.

Spirituality and the Arts

Sharon Lupton, Head of RE at Sedgefield School (secondary) is working as a Lead Teacher in RE this year (this means that a teacher identified by the subject inspector works on a particular project identified and funded by the Local Authority). Sharon is producing a piece of planning for Key Stage 3 students based on the role of the arts in helping people of faith express their spirituality. This work should be ready for schools and SACRE in the summer term.

Letter to Schools

You will remember that we received a letter from a headteacher last year querying the remit of SACRE (after we had sent a letter expressing some concern at the Key Stage 4 examination results). We agreed that we would clarify the role of RE when we wrote again this year.

I have drafted a letter which SACRE could send to schools to remind them of the presence and work of SACRE and emphasise our role and purpose in supporting and challenging schools and the Local Authority. Please see below.

Proposed SACRE Letter to Schools

Dear (Headteacher name)

As you will be aware SACRE has a statutory duty to advise the Local Authority about matters relating to religious education and collective worship in schools. In order to do this effectively SACRE monitors provision for RE in schools so that it can best offer advice to the Local Authority and support to schools.

SACRE monitors provision of RE in schools, for example, through:

- analysing the summaries of subject specialist RE visits to secondary schools undertaken by the RE Inspector
- sample visits to primary schools
- analysing reports from any Ofsted subject scrutiny visits in Durham schools
- sending and analysing questionnaires sent to schools re time provision, analysis of Agreed Syllabus, identification of areas for support
- analysing Key Stage 4 and post 16 examination data.

Findings are then used to identify key issues and ways in which SACRE and Durham Education Service can offer further support to schools.

SACRE supports schools, for example, through:

- SACRE Interfaith conferences
- funding and supporting specific projects e.g, production of short film on value of RE, competition for Celebrating RE Month
- development of support materials through the Education Development Service e.g. materials produced on the use of ICT in RE, functional skills in RE
- identifying and supporting continuing professional development for colleagues in schools
- campaigning locally and nationally for quality RE provision e.g. the SACRE Chair and SACRE members wrote to various government ministers and Members of Parliament expressing their concern about the proposed exclusion of RE from the English Baccalaureate
- writing to headteachers to offer congratulations or express concern and offer support after exam performance has been analysed.

Please be assured to Durham SACRE's commitment to supporting your school and RE department in developing and delivering high quality RE and collective worship for all students. *Maybe say more about vodcast here?*

You will be aware that SACRE has notified the Local Authority of the requirement to revise the Durham Agreed Syllabus for RE. The revision process is currently taking place and the new Syllabus will be launched in June 2012. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Isobel Short Inspector for RE if you would like further information, would like to express any views or make any recommendations.