

SACRE - NATIONAL UPDATES

June 2012

Please see below an overview of the current work of RE organisations and the latest news and developments in RE.

There remains some real concerns in the 'RE world' about the position of RE and the effect of some government policies and reduced funding for Local Authorities. However, there is also some really positive work going on in the differing organisations to support RE and raise its profile. Indeed on the morning this update is due to be sent to SACRE members with the agenda, there was an item on Radio 4's Today programme about the role of RE in schools (June 11th). This follows the publication of a survey which reports that 53% of adults in England and Wales think RE should remain a compulsory subject in schools (news release attached). John Keast Chair of REC and Father Gardner, RE Adviser for the Catholic Education Service outlined their views on the nature and purpose of RE. The interview lasted five minutes and illustrates the efforts being made throughout RE communities to safeguard RE and raise its profile.

Please see page 3 for abbreviations.

Religious Education Council (REC)

Nick Gibb (MP) addressed the REC at their AGM in June. He talked generally about the vision of the government for education but also the role of RE in schools. He reiterated the position that "the teaching of RE remains a compulsory requirement for schools. It is not a matter of choice." He also stated that (based on The School Workforce Survey):

- the number of RE teachers has increased from 10,400 in 2010 to 20,700 in 2011
- the number of hours at Key Stage 4 for teaching RE has increased from 47,300 to 47,600
- the number of pupils entered for GCSE continues to rise.

REC are going to undertake a review of the RE curriculum in line with the National Curriculum review. This will not be statutory. The timeline for this has not yet been published.

NASACRE

NASACRE are publishing 2 guidance leaflets on their website:

- Collective Worship
- Academies. This leaflet is aimed at Headteachers, Chairs of Governors, and subject leaders of RE in Academies and Free Schools. Whilst this is very useful, I do have some concerns about the leaflet, particularly in relation to the role of SACRE (nothing is said about a funding relationship between Academies, SACRE and Local Authorities). This is an issue for SACRE to discuss further.

NATRE

The Chair of NATRE, Ed Pawson, wrote to Michael Gove in May after meeting him during a school visit. His letter outlines some of the current concerns of RE and SACRE. It is available to read on the NASACRE website www.nasacre.org.uk I am not yet aware of Michael Gove's reply.

Ofsted

- A new Section 5 evaluation schedule (for general 2-day school inspections) was implemented this January. Guidance for SMSC does draw to the attention of inspectors the vital role of RE in SMSC development. Inspectors are also expected to check that a school is fulfilling its statutory requirements (eg teaching RE) and investigate if it appears they are not.
- The long report on RE (every 3 years) is due to be published at the end of 2012.
- The RE HMI (Alan Brine) doesn't feel that there is evidence of the feared 'meltdown' of RE that some anticipated last year with the introduction of E.Bacc.

All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for RE

This was set up several months ago (probably as a result for the Early Day Motion on E.Bacc last year). This is the first APPG that has ever been set up for RE. It is anticipated that MPs who are members of this can become well informed about RE, speak out in support of the subject and comment on proposals that affect RE. We are being asked to contact our MPs and ask them to join this APPG.

Department for Education

The Department has announced that the duty of Local Authorities to consider complaints about the curriculum, sex education and religious worship in maintained schools will be removed in July 2012. This has an impact on the responsibility and work of SACRE regarding collective worship. This has prompted a reaction from several Local Authorities and members in the RE world. The issue is being discussed by the REC. They intended to raise this with Nick Gibb (MP) when they met him; I have not yet heard the outcome of this.

Collective Worship

AREIAC and NASACRE have jointly pressed the Government on the need to withdraw Circular 1/94 on collective worship. Ministers are stating they do not intend to do this or review the guidance at present (this is why NASACRE/AREAIC are producing some guidance).

RE Quality Mark

A scheme is being trialled in the North West to develop a RE Quality Mark, to raise the profile and promote excellence in RE. It will be similar to Artsmark, with schools being awarded bronze, silver and gold. This is very positive and I will update on the findings of the pilot when they become available.

Short Course

Religious Studies GCSE Short Course will remain for schools from September 2012 but, from 2014, the Short Course will not count in school performance tables. It will also not be possible to accredit 2 Short Courses together (eg Citizenship/RS) as a Full Course.

Also, schools must only enter students at the **end** of a course, so it will no longer be possible for schools to enter students for RS Short Course at the end of Year 10 and then make this up to Full Course at the end of Year 11.

This may have some real implications for our schools. Several are now stopping teaching Short Course altogether and will teach Full Course in core curriculum time (less than for other subjects although many will begin teaching in Year 9, not year 10). SACRE may need to monitor this and offer support to schools in some way.

The Daily Mail and Paganism

Durham Local Authority received a Freedom of Information request regarding the teaching of paganism in RE, which I responded to (we neither encourage or forbid the teaching of paganism). The Daily Mail published an article (April 2012) about the teaching of paganism in Cornwall where the Agreed Syllabus has programmes of study for each key stage.

Abbreviations

APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
AREIAC	Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants
CYPS	Children and Young People's Services.
E.Bacc	English Baccalaureate. The measure that some schools are using for student performance - students who gain C+ at GCSE in English, Mathematics, Science, a modern foreign language, and a Humanities (Geography/History). This exclusion of RE is having some negative consequences for the subject.
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector. Work for Ofsted. Alan Brine is the HMI who is the Ofsted National Adviser for RE
NASACRE	National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education
NATRE	National Association of Teachers of RE
REC	Religious Education Council. The Chair is John Keast OBE, formerly at QCA and DFES as Adviser for RE.
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural development

SACRE - LOCAL UPDATES

June 2012

I received a phone call query (passed on from Governor Support) from a Durham parent regarding a faith visitor in school. The issue was over a neighbourhood policeman speaking to children (primary school) about his Muslim faith; an article about this was published in the local paper. I spoke at length to the headteacher and parent. Schools inviting faith members into school is something SACRE has always encouraged. It may be worth, however, reissuing our guidance to schools to ensure that they are aware of the nature and purpose of these visits and communicate these effectively to everyone concerned, including parents.

Launch and training sessions for the Agreed Syllabus are about to take place, with most schools having signed up for one session. I may offer an extra training session in September for those unable to attend in June. Academies have been charged a fee for use of the Agreed Syllabus in their school.

Gayle Hackett is beginning to edit and put together short films based on interviews with faith members. We will show these at later SACRE meetings. Thanks to all SACRE members who were interviewed.

Sharon Lupton is continuing to research and plan a unit for Key Stage 3 pupils on how religions use the arts to express spiritual ideas and beliefs. Please contact me if you have any ideas for resources from faith traditions.

We will be running various courses and networks for schools next academic year. These include:

- 3 primary networks
- 3 secondary networks
- A one day course on planning RE in the primary school
- A one day course on teaching Christianity in the primary school
- A half day course on implementing the new KS2 / KS3 bridging unit
- A day course, run by Lat Blaylock from RE Today Services on teaching GCSE in one hour a week
- A one day secondary RE conference to include several visiting speakers e.g. HMI Alan Brine, Dilwyn Hunt

We may add more courses if the need arises.