

The RE Inspector Report

Durham SACRE

Autumn Term 2015

Durham RE Networks

The Autumn Term RE networks have taken place. The special schools network has not taken place this term but will resume next term.

PRIMARY

29th September 2015. 31 delegates. Agenda items:

- What do we know about RE? (quiz in order to help new RE Co-ordinators)
- Sample plan – How and why do religious people show care for others? (Year 4 unit)
- Frequently asked questions – queries raised by delegates e.g. Is RE taught in Early Years Foundation Stage?
- Presentation by Elizabeth Baker, local storyteller on teaching about the northern saints in RE

Evaluations were good. Delegates asked for more skeleton plans for the units in the Agreed Syllabus.

SECONDARY

21st October 2015. 19 delegates (12 from Durham schools, 9 from other local authorities). Agenda items:

- Qualitative analysis of GCSE results, summer 2015. This was an opportunity for delegates to evaluate their results and reflect on reasons for successes and failures based on school provision.
- Spiritual development and RE. Discussion on how RE can make a unique contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Some practical activities given.

- The new GCSE specifications for RS. A brief look at the draft specifications for Full Course GCSE from September 2016: Edexcel, AQA, OCR, WJEC.
- Provision for RE at Key Stage 4. Discussion on the differing models for meeting the statutory requirement for RE, advantages and disadvantages of each model. (please see separate agenda item).

NETWORK ATTENDANCE

I have briefly analysed attendance at Durham's secondary RE networks over the last year (March, July, October 2015):

- 17 Durham schools have attended one or more meetings.
- 4 schools attended all 3 meetings.
- 8 schools attended 2 meetings.
- 5 schools attended one meeting
- 8 Durham schools have not attended a meeting in the last year.
- 15 schools from other local authorities (4 Darlington, 1 Middlesbrough, 2 Newcastle, 2 Northumberland, 1 Redcar and Cleveland, 5 Sunderland) have attended meetings. All of these schools have a service level agreement with Durham (they pay a fee to receive support from Durham Education Development Service). Again, not all external schools send a delegate to each meeting.

Attendance at network meetings does raise some questions and issues:

- Is the RE network the only source of subject support and training that RE leaders receive and if so why is attendance spasmodic?
- Why do some schools never attend meetings?

- Is the content and quality of what delegates receive appropriate?
- Do senior leaders encourage subject CPD?

RE Courses

There are 3 courses/conferences due to take place this year:

- **New to teaching RE/Geography/History** - 1st December 2015. This course is mainly for NQTs or Teaching Assistants who are given these curriculum areas to teach. This is the first course I have run which acknowledges that in many schools RE is taught by Teaching Assistants in teacher PPA time (time for planning). Currently there are very few delegates for this course.
- **Teaching Christianity**. This course mainly focuses on subject knowledge and is suitable for both primary and secondary teachers. It was due to take place in January but I have postponed to later in the year (June) due to poor uptake.
- **GCSE RS Conference** - 18th March 2015. This will be advertised across the region and is to help secondary RE leaders prepare for the new specifications they must all teach from September 2016.

RE Contracts

Demand for one-to-one support for RE remains high, particularly in primary schools with a focus on planning materials to teach effective RE. I have had one request for support over collective worship.

Several secondary schools are requesting support (usually just for 3 hours) for a new RE Leader.

A lot of schools are now requesting training and support in developing effective SMSC and the promotion of British values. This is a remit beyond RE but RE has a key role to play in helping schools develop good provision for the British value of 'mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'.

School Queries

I continue to be contacted by school leaders on a range of queries relating to parental queries about the nature of RE and/or collective worship/assemblies and the withdrawal of their children from RE and/or Collective Worship. Some of these queries demonstrate that there is still some confusion amongst parents and staff in schools about the nature and purpose of RE in maintained schools and non-faith based academies.

Interfaith Week

The Annual Interfaith Week in England is taking place from 15-21 November. The 3 aims of Interfaith Week are:

- strengthening good interfaith relations at all levels
- increasing awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK
- increasing understanding between people of religious and non-religious beliefs.

The Interfaith Week website encourages all sorts of groups to become involved, attend and organise events. It has suggestions for the sort of events that could take place. Whilst Durham LA and SACRE are not holding a Student Interfaith Conference this year, SACRE may wish to remind schools of this and suggest some ways in which they can mark Interfaith Week in an educationally appropriate way.