

Report to: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 20 March 2017

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Purpose: To update members on the role and work of the East Sussex SACRE.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is recommended to comment on and note:

- 1) the work of SACRE in improving the quality of religious education, especially in maintained Secondary schools;
 - 2) the work of SACRE in supporting schools with collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural development and British Values 2015-2016; and
 - 3) the three-year development plan for SACRE.
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1 Background

1.1 The role of SACRE

Since 1988 local authorities have had a statutory duty to establish a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

1.2 Duties of SACRE

- It is the duty of SACRE to advise the LA on matters relating to religious education, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).
- It is the duty of the LA to provide a locally agreed syllabus for religious education which must be reviewed every five years. Religious Education is a statutory element of the curriculum for all pupils, which is determined locally.
- The Education Act 1996 requires that each year the SACRE from each LA publish a report on standards of religious education in its schools and of the functions and actions taken by the representative groups on the council during the preceding year.

1.3 How SACRE works

- SACRE meets each term and includes representation from elected members who are appointed at the annual council meeting each May. Members' places are currently allocated on a proportionate basis (2 conservatives, 1 liberal democrat, 1 labour and 1 UKIP).
- Membership of the East Sussex SACRE currently has representation from Christian denominations and those other faith groups who represent the principal religions locally (in East Sussex this includes: the Jewish tradition, the Muslim tradition, the Buddhist tradition and the Baha'i tradition); The Church of England; Members of the Teacher Associations.
- The SACRE budget of £5,000 funds a Religious Education consultant and costs of training.
- The consultant writes a termly newsletter which goes to schools and covers National and Local issues on RE, collective worship and pupils' SMSC development.
- SACRE also deals with complaints about RE.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The National picture for RE: 'Realising the Potential' (Ofsted 2013)

Following the Ofsted Report 'Realising the Potential' (2013), there have been several new initiatives:

- The formation of a 'Commission for Religious Education. This is a high-profile independent Commission, which has been established with a remit to make wide-ranging recommendations to overhaul religious education in schools. The Commission has been asked to review the legal, education and policy frameworks for religious education in all primary schools, secondary schools and further education colleges in England. It will report back in 2017. The commission is headed up by The Very Rev Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, former Chief Education Officer for the Church of England.
- The Church of England have commissioned 'RE Today' to produce a new set of materials to improve the teaching of Christianity. 'Understanding Christianity' is a huge project and is having a significant impact in the church schools where it is being trialed.
- The East Sussex Annual Conference in 2017 aims to focus on this and allow non-church schools to access the training and materials.

2.2 Religious Education in East Sussex and the work of East Sussex SACRE

- Analysis of GCSE outcomes considers full and short courses and both outcomes and take-up. Across the variables East Sussex trends, in 'comparison' to the national picture, is mixed. See **Appendix 2** for full analysis of GCSE RE results in East Sussex 2015.
- Members of SACRE have a programme to visit all maintained secondary schools. So far the results show a very mixed picture with regards to compliance. Where there are RE specialists teaching the subject most pupils are given the opportunity for accreditation but where there are limited numbers of specialist staff, pupils are not being given their statutory entitlement
- During 2015-2016 the following training for RE has taken place in East Sussex:
 - 8th October – Understanding Concepts in Judaism and Islam Course
 - 23rd October 2016 – Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) and British Values -Day training at Holy Cross Primary School
 - 5th November 2015 - Annual Conference– Moving Forward in RE
 - 24th May – Assessment without Levels Course
 - 22nd June – SMSC and British Values Course
 - 23rd June – Winning in the Game of Life – A programme for pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

It was agreed that there would be no network meetings this year instead the funding would be spent on reviewing the Agreed Syllabus, writing materials on the Faith and Belief guidance, Assessment guidance (RE-Think –RE) and training courses.

- 'Faith and Belief in Educational Settings'. This 126 page document was a joint initiative between East Sussex and Brighton and Hove and contributed to the LA's public sector equality duty. It was written by Sam Beal – from the Standards and Achievement team in Brighton and Hove and Lilian Weatherley RE Consultant to East Sussex. It has now gone to all East Sussex schools and received a very positive response. Details within **Appendix 1**.
- East Sussex SACRE also funded the writing of new materials on assessment in RE. This disc 'Re-Think RE' will be going into schools in 2017
- SACRE has a three-year development plan 2015 – 2018, which outlines the work of SACRE see **Appendix 3**.
- Ofsted now regularly inspects schools on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their promotion of British values. The SACRE consultant has provided training for headteachers to ensure that East Sussex schools are prepared for this element of an Ofsted inspection.
- One complaint was received about Priory school in Lewes not fulfilling its statutory duty

and this is ongoing with the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)

- The RE Agreed Syllabus has to be revised every 5 years, SACRE has convened an Agreed Syllabus Conference to begin this process.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Committee is asked to comment on and note the work of SACRE and to continue to support its work with schools.

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LOCAL MEMBERS: All

APPENDICES:

- Appendix 1: Annual report for NASACRE
- Appendix 2: GCSE results
- Appendix 3: SACRE three year development plan 2015 – 2018

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None