

Report to: Peoples Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 7 March 2019

By: The Chairperson of the East Sussex SACRE

Title: Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1) The work of SACRE in supporting schools and improving the quality of religious education, especially in maintained Secondary schools

2) The three year Development Plan for SACRE

1. Background

1.1. Since 1988 Local Authorities have had a statutory duty to establish a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

The duties of SACRE

1.2. It is the duty of SACRE to advise the Local Authority (LA) on matters relating to religious education, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

1.3. 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. Academies are not obliged to follow the agreed syllabus but must provide religious education.

1.4. The Education Act 1996 requires SACRE each year to publish a report on standards in its schools and the actions taken during the year.

How SACRE works

1.5. SACRE meets each term and includes representatives from elected members who are appointed at the Annual Council meeting in May. Members' places are currently allocated on a proportionate basis (3 Conservatives, 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Labour).

1.6. SACRE currently has representatives from Christian denominations and other faith groups who represent the principal religions in the area. This includes the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Baha'i traditions. We also have a Humanist observer.

1.7. We hope soon to welcome a representative from the Orthodox Church.

1.8. There is also a Church of England Group and a group of members from the Teaching Associations.

1.9. The SACRE Budget allocated in 2018/19 was £18,000. SACRE was given a direct budget of £5,000 for operational work which was topped up by £2,500 contribution from the Schools, Learning and Effectiveness Service (SLES). The budget funds a Religious Education Consultant and training costs. It has been possible to supplement the budget by charging for training courses and the Annual Conference but this is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to fund. The budget for 2019/2020 has been reduced to a total of £10,000. This represents £7,000 for direct support (adjusting for the expected continued reduction in training income) and £3,000 for

infrastructure. We do not envisage any impact to SACRE, as the reductions relate to overhead allocations, with the direct SACRE budget protected.

1.10. The consultant writes a termly newsletter which goes to schools and covers national and local issues.

1.11. SACRE also deals with any complaints about RE.

2. Supporting Information

The National picture for RE

2.1. A Commission on Religious Education sponsored by the Religious Education Council issued a report in 2018. This included some useful recommendations about Teacher training and bursaries. It is suggesting reconstituting SACREs as Local Area Networks for Religious Education and Worldviews. The Government has indicated that it does not intend to legislate and change the nature of SACREs.

2.2. Due to RE not being part of the EBACC qualifications, the numbers taking GCSE RE have fallen nationally and there is a challenge recruiting specialist RE teachers.

Religious education in East Sussex and the work of East Sussex SACRE

2.3. GCSE results for 2018 show a decline in GCSE take up. See Appendix 1.

2.4. The Religious Education Full course take up for East Sussex in 2018 was 32.2%, this is 5.5 percentage points lower than the 2017 take up of 37.7%.

2.5. The national take up figure for state funded schools was 37.2%, 5 percentage points higher than East Sussex, however nationally the take up fell by 9.8 percentage points from 47.0% in 2017.

2.6. The short course take up for East Sussex was 2.2%, 1.6 percentage points lower than the 2017 figure of 3.8%.

2.7. Nationally the short course take up was 3.0%, a fall of 2.9 percentage points from the 2017 take up of 5.9%.

2.8. Training for the last 12 months has been provided through:

- (i) A SACRE Conference for Primary and Secondary RE subject Leaders in March 2018.
- (ii) A primary and secondary network meeting in October with 2 further primary network meetings in November. There were also training courses on 'Being a new Primary Subject leader' in October and on 'Primary assessment' in January 2019.
- (iii) School visits have continued including Broad Oak, Cradle Hill and Denton primaries as well as repeat visits to Causeway and Priory.
- (iv) A complaint was made about provision at a secondary school. Since the initial complaint the school has introduced significant improvements and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are now being fulfilled. There are also concerns about RE outcomes at a number of other secondary schools.
- (v) SACRE has a three-year development plan 2018-2021, which outlines the work of SACRE. See Appendix 2.
- (vi) There are potential curriculum entitlement issues at several Academies. Whilst these are, of course, independent of the LA, and do not have to adhere to the locally agreed syllabus, they still have a statutory duty as recently underlined by the Minister for Schools.
- (vii) Whilst at the last SACRE visit, an academy was meeting the standards, a recent complaint has been made that RE is not being taught after Year 9. We are in contact with the Head Teacher.
- (viii) Inadequacies are acknowledged by staff at two further secondary schools where staff are working with SACRE on improvements.

2.9. SACRE is seeking in all cases to solve difficulties by a cooperative partnership approach and through offering a high quality CPD programme which is available for all schools and academies to access.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1. SACRE is legally obliged to produce an annual report and it is best practice for this to be considered by the County Council.

3.2. The scrutiny Committee is asked to support SACRE in its ongoing work to seek improvements to RE provision.

Councillor Roy Galley
CHAIRPERSON OF EAST SUSSEX SACRE

Appendix 1 – GCSE results

Appendix 2 - SACRE Development Plan 2018- 2021