

Report to: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 21 March 2016

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Standing Advisory Council for Advisory for Religious Education

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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1) note the work of SACRE in improving the quality of religious education, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural development and British Values 2015-2016;
 - 2) note the ongoing three year development plan for SACRE; and
 - 3) continue to support SACRE in its role in promoting British values.
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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 Local Authority (LA) on matters relating to Religious Education (RE), 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. 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 representatives from Christian denominations and other faith groups who represent the principal religions locally. Current representatives are from the Jewish, Islam and Baha'i communities together with The Church of England and Members of the Teacher Associations.
- The SACRE annual 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. The Consultant is also part of the SLES team and supports individual schools through their service level agreements.
- SACRE also deals with complaints and queries about RE.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The National picture for RE:

- Weaknesses in the provision and teaching RE, which meant that too many pupils were leaving school with low levels of subject knowledge and understanding.
- Weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge; poor weak assessment practice and ineffective monitoring.
- Limited access to effective training for teachers.
- Secondary provision was often inadequate and did not meet statutory entitlement for pupils.

2.2 National Initiatives:

Promoting fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools

November 2014 saw the introduction of the DfE Guidance 'Promoting fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools'. Ofsted now inspects schools on their promotion of British values.¹ The SACRE consultant has provided training for headteachers to ensure that East Sussex schools are prepared for this element of an Ofsted inspection. The consultant has also delivered this training for several individual schools and presented a briefing to school governors at Area meetings. Additional sessions with Governors on British Values have been completed by a Headteacher from a local church school following feedback from Governors that they wanted more information on this area within the school curriculum.

A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools

A pamphlet written by the Rt Hon Charles Clarke and Prof Linda Woodhead was launched at the House of Lords on Monday 15th June. *'We began this pamphlet by suggesting that, seven decades after 1944, the time is overdue for a new settlement in the relationship between religion and schools. The old settlement no longer works as well as it needs to for the benefit of schools, religion and wider society.'* See **Appendix 1** for full summary.

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

- Analysis of GCSE outcomes to consider full and short courses and both outcomes and take-up. Across the variables East Sussex trends, in 'comparison' to the national picture is improved with many schools achieving above the national picture. See **Appendix 2** for full analysis of GCSE RE results in East Sussex 2015
- During 2015 the following training for RE has taken place in East Sussex: termly twilight network sessions for RE subject leaders; training on assessment in RE; self-evaluation in RE.
- The focus this year has been on teaching Judaism and Islam in the primary school. This was reflected in the workshops at the annual RE conference.
- SACRE has a three-year development plan 2015 – 2018 which outlines the work of SACRE. See **Appendix 3**.
- Members of SACRE and the RE Consultant have attended Governor training sessions to talk about the role of SACRE and to ensure that governors are fully aware of their statutory responsibility for RE, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and understand the emphasis on British values.

¹ 'Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools' was published by the DfE in November 2014 as a response to what seemed to be a growing emergence of extremism within the Muslim communities. The document reinforces the duty on schools to promote pupils Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and states that, as part of this schools should; *'promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.'*

Ofsted were then given the task of inspecting this area to ensure that maintained schools are meeting these requirements. To read the full document go to

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc>

- SACRE is in the process of reviewing its Agreed Syllabus and setting up an Agreed Syllabus conference. See 1.2 above (Duties of SACRE). To enable SACRE to complete this process we have an increased budget of £12,000.
- No complaints were received and resolved by SACRE during the past year.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 The committee is asked to note the work of SACRE and to continue to support its work with schools.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Appendix 1: Full Summary of ' A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools
- Appendix 2: GCSE results for RE 2015
- Appendix 3: SACRE three year development plan 2015 - 2018