

**Report to:** Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 2 March 2018

**By:** Director of Children's Services

**Title:** Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

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

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**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 2016-2017; 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 Local Authority (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 (3 conservatives, 1 liberal democrat and 1 labour).
- 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 and Members of the Teacher Associations.
- The SACRE budget 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:

- **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. The Commission produced its interim report 'Religious Education for All' in September 2017. It will report back in 2018. The commission is headed up by The Very Rev Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, former Chief Education Officer for the Church of England.
- **Understanding Christianity:** This Church of England project is having a significant impact in the church schools and East Sussex schools where it is being trialed. The East Sussex Annual Conference in 2017 focused on this and allowed 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 analysis of GCSE results in East Sussex 2017.
- 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 2016-2017 training and support for RE has taken place in East Sussex. See the Annual Report at **Appendix 1** for details.
- Network meetings did not take place last year. It was agreed that 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'. See **Appendix 1**.
- SACRE has a three-year development plan 2015 – 2018, which outlines the work of SACRE. See **Appendix 3**.
- The complaint about an East Sussex school not fulfilling its statutory duty is ongoing with the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) and the DfE. SACRE has supported the school. As a result of discussions with the school about the language of the old syllabus (e.g. *should* as opposed to *will*) SACRE was asked to submit its new Agreed Syllabus to the DfE solicitors for scrutiny. This has taken place, each word has been checked and the syllabus has been declared legal.
- The RE Agreed Syllabus has to be revised every 5 years, SACRE has completed this process and the revised Agreed Syllabus 'Continuing the Journey' is in East Sussex schools.

## 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 2016-17 for NASACRE
- Appendix 2: GCSE results
- Appendix 3: SACRE three year development plan 2015 – 2018

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None