

**Standing Advisory Council
on Religious Education in
South Gloucestershire
Annual Report
2011-2012**



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I have no doubt that South Gloucestershire's SACRE's reputation is a fine one of which the Council and Children and Young People's Committee can be justifiably proud. Whilst the statutory functions are fully met, it is the SACRE's reputation for innovation which makes it outstanding. It is the desire amongst all members to enrich the quality of RE in all schools by direct involvement with teachers, pupils and students which makes it special.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senior Officers and Members for their longstanding support for our work. At a time in our national life when RE could not be more important, the funding of SACRE by South Gloucestershire Council enables SACRE members to concentrate on promoting the highest quality RE.

My gratitude is extended to all the members of the SACRE whose voluntary commitment seems limitless and who must be credited with creating a SACRE with the reputation I have described.

Alderman Colin Cradock
Chair of the South Gloucestershire SACRE

What is SACRE?

SACRE is the abbreviation for the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Its composition is specifically multi-faith and includes serving primary and secondary school teachers. There is also a representative from the British Humanist Association.

It is a statutory requirement for every Local Authority to have a SACRE and its purpose is to advise on the effective provision of RE and Collective Worship.

The South Gloucestershire SACRE believes that Religious Education is unique because it is the only subject where the curriculum is not prescribed nationally but agreed locally.

SACRE takes an active part in the review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus every five years. The current syllabus is called 'Mystery and Meaning' and the current revision was launched in 2009. Work on the next revision is due to begin in 2012-2013.



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Support for schools

There are many ways in which South Gloucestershire's SACRE helps schools and their RE teachers. The key events during the academic year of 2011-2012 were as follows:

* **Annual Teachers' conference:**

Our annual teachers' conference was again held jointly with the Bristol SACRE. SACRE fully funds the conference to ensure that the only costs to schools are supply cover for the day. Many South Gloucestershire schools send at least one representative to the day. We have found that holding it jointly with the Bristol SACRE helps to spread the cost, and also gives opportunities to share good practice with our Bristol colleagues. This year's conference had a key note speech on 'Raising attainment in RE' and was followed by practical workshops on a variety of topics.

* **NeedLess Greed:**

SACRE has held events for upper primary school children for several years under the banner of 'NeedLess Greed', to help schools explore some of the underlying questions of religion and ethics. It also gives children an opportunity to meet people of faiths other than their own thanks to the participation of many of our local faith communities. These events have been very popular, with excellent feedback from staff and pupils who attended.

SACRE had been unable to hold its 2011 NeedLess Greed event due to industrial action on the date of the event. As an alternative event, SACRE organized 'The Big Questions' - see below.

Plans were made for a 2012 event at King's Oak Academy and thanks are due to the school for its kindness in allowing us to use the school. However, although all the places for the event were initially taken, some schools had to withdraw from the event due to transport difficulties and competing events to celebrate the Jubilee and Olympics. The numbers fell to a level which made the event unviable and it had to be cancelled. SACRE was very disappointed with this outcome and the SACRE Events sub-group is now considering the way forward for these events.

*** The Big Questions:**

SACRE held this event on 18th November 2011 for Year 6 pupils. Its aim was to introduce **philosophy** to children and encourage them to think about religion's role in considering the 'Big Questions' of life. 99 Year 6 pupils attended the event at Chipping Sodbury School and thanks are due to the school for its hospitality.

A small selection of questions generated by Year 6 pupils who attended the Big Questions event:

- ❖ Who is God?
- ❖ What is the purpose of life?
- ❖ What am I truly like?
- ❖ What is life?
- ❖ Who invented God?
- ❖ How was God made?
- ❖ What is happiness?
- ❖ Who wrote the Bible?
- ❖ How did we get here?
- ❖ Why can't we fly?
- ❖ How does my brain work?
- ❖ Is life just a dream?

*** Support for NQTs:**

The RE Advisory teacher Kathryn Symons held a twilight session for NQTs on RE and the Locally Agreed Syllabus at St Andrew's CE VC primary school, Cromhall – with thanks to the Headteacher and SACRE member Esther Saunders. The session concentrated on delivering engaging RE, with an opportunity to see examples of good practice on display at the school.

*** Support for Higher Level Teaching Assistants who are helping to deliver RE:**

A session was held for HLTAs called 'Jazz up RE' – at Christchurch Juniors in Downend on Friday 10th February 2012. It was led by the RE Advisory Teacher Kathryn Symons



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Monitoring of RE provision in South Gloucestershire (2011)

SACRE has a role to advise the Council on matters related to RE provision in South Gloucestershire's schools. To do this, SACRE analyses the GCSE/A level results for RE, and also receives reports from Primary schools on the Key Stage 2 RE assessments. During this reporting year SACRE considered the public examination results for 2011.

*** GCSE results:**

There were 561 students who took the full GCSE full RE course, the highest number ever. The number of short-course entrants was 1400 and this continues the gradual fall from the highest value which was 1499 in 2008.

The overall rate for A*-C grades in the full GCSE was 79% (up from 74% in 2010). 72% of boys and 85% of girls obtained A*-C grades. Girls' results at A*-C have improved by 15 percentage points since 2006 and boys' results have improved by 8 percentage points. Overall there has been an 11 percentage point [6] improvement since 2006.

In the short course 51% of entrants gained A*- C grades, down from 55% last year. 44% of boys and 59% of girls obtained A*-C grades. Overall, girls' and boys' results at A*-C have fallen by 2 percentage points since 2006 with 2010 being the best year at 55%.

*** A level results:**

In South Gloucestershire since 2006 the number of entries in any one year has fluctuated between 38 (2009) and 58 (2008). In 2011 there were 54 entrants. Many more girls study the subject than boys. Because there are relatively few candidates, year-on-year comparisons are not particularly reliable and results fluctuate a great deal from one year to another.

In 2011 67% of boys who took the RE A Level gained a grade at A*-C, up from 57% last year. 74% of girls who took the qualification gained a grade at A*-C down from 93% last year. The overall rate for A*-C grades was 72%, compared to 81% nationally. All entrants gained the qualification, as has been the case for many years now.

*** AS-level results:**

Most students take AS-levels in Year 12, the first year in the sixth-form, and RE teachers hope that these will convert to a full A level in the second year /Year 13. In South Gloucestershire's schools, 71 students took Religious Studies AS-level in 2010, but there were only 54 students taking A-level in 2011.

In 2011 there were 81 entrants for AS level, the highest number since 2007 (84 entries), so it is hoped that the A level entries in 2012 will also rise. The overall rate for A*-C grades was 46%, compared to 63% nationally this and last year. Because there are relatively few candidates, year-on-year comparisons are not particularly reliable and overall, results have varied from 46% (2011) to 75% (2006). Nevertheless this year has seen a significant overall fall in AS results.



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*** End of Key Stage 2 assessments:**

It is statutory that primary/junior/special schools should assess their pupils in RE to the eight point scale at the end of Year 6 by virtue of what is prescribed in the local authority agreed syllabus, Mystery and Meaning. It is not statutory that these results should be collected by the local authority or SACRE.

SACRE has requested/invited primary schools to send in their their results, but this has become harder every year with more and more schools declining or not responding. Schools have been approached twice for the 2011 assessments but only two have sent details.

The revised Ofsted framework specifically identifies SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) for inspection. Although this is broader than just RE, it is hoped that future inspection reports may give sufficient detail on which to base an assessment of the effectiveness of RE at primary level in South Gloucestershire.

*** Assessment sub-group:**

During 2011-2012, the SACRE has considered ways to improve information it receives about provision and to offer support to schools. A sub group for assessment support and monitoring has been set up and has looked at baseline assessments for secondary schools, and Year 2 and Year 6 assessment in primary schools. The group would like to help schools to share good examples of assessment practice via the SACRE website. The group also considered ways to encourage sharing of data and good practice between primary and secondary phases so that students made unbroken progression in the subject across the two phases.



Publications during the reporting period

SACRE provides advice to schools in the form of publications which are circulated to schools. During 2011-2012 some previously published items were reviewed to ensure they remained useful to schools and up to date. It was decided that 'What is SACRE?' remains up to date but that 'Essential information for Headteachers and Governors on RE and Collective Worship' needed revision to include advice for Academies. Work will be progressed on this revision in 2012-2013.

Work was also done to maintain the SACRE website and update the information displayed there.

Attendance by SACRE members at outside events

*** South West Regional SACRE conference:**

Three SACRE members attended the 2012 conference and reported back to the following SACRE meeting. The conference had a keynote address on the theme of the current climate for RE and the challenges it, and SACREs, are facing. SACRE's Chair Colin Cradock spoke to the conference about the work of our SACRE and showed how photographs of events, and our publicity banners could be used to promote the work of a SACRE.

*** National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) Annual Meeting:**

SACRE members Colin Cradock and Derek Jay also attended the annual national meeting of NASACRE in May 2012 and reported back to the SACRE on the matters discussed.



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- * A SACRE stand was staffed at the Diamond Jubilee Fun Day in Kingswood Park on 7th June, and at the Engage Cultural Festival at the WISE campus on 7th July.

Thanks are due to those members and officers willing to attend these sessions on SACRE's behalf.

National Issues

- * **English Baccalaureate:**

During 2011, SACRE considered at some length the Government's decision to create an English Baccalaureate at GCSE level by grouping together some existing GCSE subjects. This did not include RE, and SACRE noted the concern of faith groups, SACREs, the National Association of SACREs, teachers, and RE teaching organisations at this decision.

During 2011-2012 SACRE has monitored the situation in South Gloucestershire by considering if there has been any impact on GCSE and A level entries (See above for detailed analysis of public examination results). SACRE notes that it is still too early to assess any significant impact locally. However, the RE Council, which is a national body, has identified an 8 per cent fall in numbers taking the short course version of the subject following its exclusion from the EBacc. This contrasts with a 17 per cent increase in pupils taking the full 2 year course which they would have begun before the EBacc was introduced. The RE Council has expressed its concern that this may be the start of a fall in numbers taking RE at Key Stage 4, with a consequent drop in the numbers then taking A level.



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- * **Parliamentary Group on RE:** An All Party Parliamentary group for RE has recently been founded with the aim of raising awareness amongst MPs and others about the importance of RE in the curriculum.
- * **Academies:** The National Association of SACREs has now produced guidance for Academies on the role of SACRE and RE. SACRE considered this guidance which will be used to inform the revision of Essential Information for Headteachers and Governors

Input from SACRE members

SACRE members are encouraged to share information and insights into their own faiths and beliefs in a short presentation to SACRE meetings. These have been welcomed to enable all members to increase their understanding of other perspectives.

Our Buddhist member Chris John shared his experience of becoming a Buddhist and gave a short presentation on the key tenets of his faith.

Our Humanist representative shared his experience of meeting Humanists from other SACREs. It was clear that not all SACREs encourage the attendance of Humanist representatives, although the guidance we use recommends that we do so.

Our representative from Clifton Catholic diocese, April Begley arranged for SACRE to visit Clifton Cathedral. The Cathedral kindly hosted a SACRE meeting and Canon Finley from the Cathedral gave a presentation on the history and work of the Cathedral.





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Statutory matters

- SACRE has a statutory role to decide on any determinations. These are requests by schools to move away from the requirement for collective worship to be wholly or mainly of a Christian character. During the period of this report, there have been no requests for determinations.
- Where a complaint has been made about the RE curriculum in a South Gloucestershire school, it should be referred to South Gloucestershire Council for it to deal with. SGC has undertaken to seek SACRE's advice on any such complaint. While the SACRE Serving Officer and the RE Advisory teacher have answered many queries and given schools advice on RE and Collective Worship, there have been no formal complaints within this reporting period.
- SACRE has a complaints procedure to deal with any complaints made against SACRE. There were no such complaints in the reporting period.

Members of SACRE September 2011-July 2012:

Committee A: Christian and other religious denominations 7 Members	Colin Cradock Ramila Patel Linda Pope April Begley Mukhtar Ahmad Younis Chris John Rupinder Kanda
Committee B – Church of England – up to 3 members	Katy Staples Esther Saunders Doreen Lindup (to November 2011)
Committee C – teachers nominated by the South Gloucestershire TCC – up to 6 members:	Kath McCarthy Hazel Jefferies Eve Scott Susan Weaver Leah Osborne Mary-Anne Willmott
Committee D – Local Authority representatives – up to 3 members	Cllr Jane Allinson Cllr Matthew Riddle Cllr Gareth Manson
Committee E – non voting Co-opted – up to 6 members	Roger Allinson, Derek Jay Alex Howard Helenka Stachera Peter Day Chris Willmore (to November 2011)

During the reporting period, SACRE's chair was Alderman Colin Cradock, and the Vice-Chair was Mary-Anne Willmott.

How SACRE is funded/administered

SACRE receives funding of approximately £11,500 per annum from South Gloucestershire Council. SACRE creates an annual budget plan for how its funding is to be spent and expenditure is monitored by a designated SACRE member. A budget report is presented and discussed at each SACRE meeting. Thanks are due to Chris Willmore for her work as the SACRE budget monitor, and also to Peter Day who has now taken over the role.

All SACRE's members are volunteers who give up their time freely and enthusiastically to help SACRE with its work.

SACRE has a part time clerk. Antony Evans is the LA Serving officer for SACRE. SACRE has worked closely with the South Gloucestershire RE Advisory Teacher. However, the Advisory Teacher post for RE ended on 31 March 2012. SACRE also works closely with Kathryn Symons the Advanced Skills Teacher for RE and thanks her for the work she has done to support RE teachers, and to provide training for NQTs and HTLAs, and for her work on SACRE events.

SACRE works to the non-statutory guidance in the 1994 document: Circular 1/94. Parts of that document have been replaced with the guidance: 'Religious Education in English Schools: Non statutory guidance 2010'.

South Gloucestershire Council has approved a constitution for SACRE. During 2011-2012 SACRE undertook a review of its constitution to ensure its compatibility with the new guidance. It proposed some minor amendments to South Gloucestershire Council which were accepted.



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SACRE also prepares an annual development plan to guide its work.

SACRE meetings are usually held at The Grange School, Warmley. Thanks are due to the school for allowing us to do so. The meetings are well attended by members and are also open to members of the public who should contact the Clerk for details of forthcoming meetings. Occasionally, SACRE takes the opportunity to hold its meetings in places of worship and wishes to thank April Begley for help to arrange a visit to Clifton Cathedral and also the Diocesan Authorities for their kind welcome to us.

Events organization:

SACRE had previously agreed, in principle, to use part of its budget for 2011-2012 to fund someone to help with the organization of SACRE events. During 2011-2012 SACRE received approval from South Gloucestershire Council to progress this proposal and the role has now been taken up by Hannah Wood.

SACRE has also worked with the Printing department of SGC to create two display banners for use at our events to promote awareness of SACRE's role.

The South Gloucestershire SACRE can be contacted via its Clerk:

Joanna Wallis
4 Kidney Hill
Westerleigh
Bristol
BS37 8QY

joanna@wallisfamily.plus.com



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