

Worcestershire

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Annual Report
for the Academic Year
2020-2021

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The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is a statutory body set up to advise the Local Authority on matters related to religious education and collective worship. Its members are drawn from teachers, Local Authority representatives including Councillors, faith representatives from the Church of England and a range of Christian denominations, and representatives from other religious groups represented in the region.

SACRE's key functions include monitoring the provision and quality of RE and providing advice and support on the effective teaching of RE in accordance with the agreed syllabus. This includes advice on methods of teaching, choice of teaching material and provision of teacher training. This is primarily done through the review and implementation of the locally agreed syllabus, a process which is required every five years. This is followed by on-going monitoring of its effectiveness in the light of changing national education policy.

1. Introduction and overview

The Learning and Achievement functions of Worcestershire County Council were commissioned out to Babcock International for 2016-2020. These functions were taken over in 2020 by Worcestershire Children First. This is the company responsible for delivering children's services across the county of Worcestershire. These services include children's social care, education, early help and fostering.

The company is 100% owned by Worcestershire County Council and delivers its children's services on behalf of the local authority working with partners across the county to ensure children, young people and families receive the best possible service.

SACRE is grateful to Worcestershire County Council for its continuing support, via Worcestershire Children First. Its three-year funding arrangement has enabled SACRE to create a Development Plan for these three years. SACRE endeavours to offer maximum support to schools through its use of conferences, training opportunities and network meetings.

Worcestershire SACRE met three times in 2020-2021, all online

- 15 October 2020
- 24 February 2021
- 14 July 2021

The minutes of these meetings are available on the County Council Website.

The meetings included discussion of the following:

- RE provision in schools, including using school workforce data
- Agreed syllabus launch conference and follow-up training; support for schools
- Communicating with schools
- Local network groups (NATRE)
- SACRE Constitution and Development plan
- National RE news updates
- How schools are managing to engage pupils through online learning, and how schools were able to celebrate Christmas, Diwali and Eid under lockdown restrictions
- SACRE Twitter account
- Briefings on the RE Council's worldviews projects and the Ofsted Research Review
- Feedback from members on local initiatives, including the Worcestershire Inter Faith Forum, whose training is now online, the Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcomes Refugees Project, links with Birmingham Progressive Synagogue and the Gurdwara in Handsworth.

2. Membership

Membership is kept under review each year. In 2020-2021, membership was as follows:

Committee A: Christian denominations and other religions	Mrs L Thorne (Ba'hai – Chair until October 2020) Mr G Bounds (Free Church Representative) Mrs T Khawaja (Muslim) Mrs C Parker (Methodist) Dr Y Stollard (Jewish) Mr A Couper (Quaker) Mr J Loyal (Sikh)
Committee B: Church of England	Mrs Kate Cope (until Oct 2020) Ms Danielle Evans Mr Duncan Hutchison (from Feb 2021)
Committee C: Teachers	Ms C Betteridge Mr C Giles
Committee D: Local Authority elected representatives	Cllr R Lunn (Chairman – October 2020-May 2021) Cllr M Jenkins Cllr K Pollock (until May 2021) Cllr M Allcott (from May 2021) Cllr E Marshall (from May 2021)
Co-opted	Ms E Hill (University of Worcester)
Clerk to SACRE LA Officer Adviser	Ms K Griffiths Ms N Jones (Worcestershire Children First) Mr S Pett (RE Today)

SACRE would like to record its gratitude to Mrs Lindsay Thorne for her many years on SACRE, including as Chair from 2017 to 2020.

3. Supporting RE in Worcestershire: the agreed syllabus

The new Worcestershire agreed syllabus was due to be launched live in June 2020. With COVID restrictions, this was not possible. Instead, RE Today recorded an introduction to the syllabus and made that available to all schools, along with the syllabus and support materials to primary and secondary schools in June 2020.

SACRE decided that it would be good to run a follow-up conference to support schools with the new syllabus. This took place online 1.00-5.00pm 27 Jan 2021.

Sessions included:

- The intent of the new agreed syllabus: belief, impact, connections
- Implementing the agreed syllabus
- Impact: teaching and learning, achievement and assessment

SACRE members representing Worcestershire Inter Faith Forum (WIFF) took part, setting out what WIFF can offer to schools and taking some questions.

57 teachers attended the conference, from 51 schools. 32 schools requested the video recordings instead of attending live. Feedback was very positive, although evaluation forms were not gathered for this online event.

Worcestershire and Herefordshire SACREs continue to share the same agreed syllabus, so training that is available for either county has been made available to neighbouring schools.

4. Supporting RE in Worcestershire: local groups

There are a number of active local groups, most affiliated to NATRE. The Rivers MAT holds a regular NATRE primary local group meeting each term, with up to 35 teachers attending. Diocesan primary Hubs are based in Malvern and South Bromsgrove, and a local group in Redditch has also started. The secondary NATRE group met in October 2020 and February 2021. Their plans for another GCSE conference with the University of Worcestershire are on-going.

5. Supporting RE in Worcestershire: summer conferences

Primary Conference 2021:

Plans to hold in-person summer conferences were abandoned in February 2020. The advantage of moving to online conferences via Zoom was that the same event could be made available to both Worcestershire and Herefordshire schools, as they share the same agreed syllabus. Another advantage was that a whole school could register for the day and different members of staff could attend different sessions.

The primary conference was held online on 15 June 2021. 109 teachers attended in all, 73 of whom were from Worcestershire. The conference supported schools in implementing the new agreed syllabus. It was led by Fiona Moss and Stephen Pett, national advisers from RE Today, and included sessions on:

- Ofsted and RE
- Teaching about Muslims and Hindus
- RE and climate justice
- Multidisciplinary RE

72% of delegates rated the conference as excellent value, the rest saying it was good value. Some people found the online experience was not ideal, but most delegates welcomed the access it gave. Representative feedback comments include:

- *Very informative with an excellent balance of useful resources and up to date information about the subject.*
- *Really liked it virtually as it cut down on travel and I was able to focus on what was being said. I also feel the sessions were timed excellently.*
- *Ofsted updates really useful as we are a small school and don't always know what is changing*
- *An excellent day. I became subject lead 5 years ago and joined NATRE. I have to say all the courses that I've attended with you and the resources have been top-notch*
- *It was very informative and provided lots of excellent work to support our I, I & I for Ofsted but also some different activities to support classroom teaching and learning - fabulous day all round. Thank you*
- *A very well-presented day with surprisingly slick use of technology which was a breath of fresh air! Very good content and useful resources. I did feel that much was aimed at KS2 (upper) so would have been good to have explored more about how this fits best with younger children.*
- *The day flew by, which was amazing, considering being on zoom all day. So many brilliant resources and ideas for teaching.*
- *All sessions were really beneficial especially the practical ideas in the second session and the III Ofsted guidance. It was really useful to see which units the resources/ideas could be linked with. Thank you.*
- *Great to have so many ideas for exciting RE practice. Appreciate the breakout rooms, enables interaction and comparison of what's happening in other schools.*
- *Really useful feedback on the new syllabus and very up to date with the latest Ofsted framework*

Secondary Conference 2021:

The annual secondary conference saw the three counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire join together once again. Held online on 25 June 2021, the conference was attended by 22

teachers. 90% rated the conference as excellent, and 10% as good. Led by Lat Blaylock and Stephen Pett, national advisers from RE Today, the programme included:

- Anti-racist RE
- Multidisciplinary RE
- Picturing Islam, Picturing Muslims
- TeachMeet (local teachers)

Teachers were positive about the day and clear about actions they would take as a result. Representative comments include the following:

- *Although very different - zoom! - still a fantastic day. As always I feel refreshed and positive about the future of RE. The ideas and topics were excellent and I will definitely be using many of the activities.*
- *I was surprised how close it came to the joy of attending a face to face conference. Lots of fantastic and inspiring ideas. Thank you both.*
- *As always, fantastic resources, ideas and new perspectives to explore. This conference reinvigorates me and at the end of this year, that has been especially needed! I particularly enjoyed the Anti-racist RS session. Thanks to all involved, brilliant.*
- *Very well run, professional, friendly and incredibly useful. I will be using so much from this day as inspiration!*
- *I can actually use all the ideas and resources in the classroom!*
- *Great resources and ideas - many of these I plan to use in my own teaching. Thank you. Inspiring- it made me rethink my plans and critically examine my thinking on Islam*
- *I plan to try and incorporate virtually every element into my teaching practice as/when the need arises. I know that's vague, but I'm not sure what my teaching load is next year yet.*
- *I will be reviewing my curriculum with a critical eye to ensure it continues to evolve.*
- *[Actions to follow] So much! Tweaking existing SOL but also inspired to move forward on our multi-disciplinary approach!*

6. Exam results summer 2021

Due to the pandemic, GCSE and A level exams were cancelled this summer. Instead, centre assessed grades (CAG) were awarded to pupils who sat GCSE and A level RS this year. However, in line with DFE guidance, these should not be used for analysis so there is no examination data to report on.

7. Future support for RE

On-going support for teachers, developing their ability to plan, using the new agreed syllabus planning steps, and for improving teaching and learning in RE, is planned for 2021-2022, including:

- Annual SACRE conference for primary teachers, focusing on ideas for teaching and learning, based on the new syllabus, including planning, Ofsted's types of knowledge, and the worldviews approach.
- Annual SACRE secondary conference, in partnership with Herefordshire and Gloucestershire SACREs. This will focus on supporting teachers in exploring what a worldviews approach looks like, some ways of applying different ways of knowing in the classroom, and ideas for exploring Sikhi in lessons.
- School Survey to assess impact and value of revised agreed syllabus.
- Offer of free training on multidisciplinary approaches to RE, as part of the Templeton World Charity Foundation Big Questions in Classrooms programme. A group of Worcestershire primary schools will be able to attend three and a half days of CPD over the year, as part of a research project led by RE Today, to examine how the impact of multidisciplinary approaches.