



# **Devon SACRE\* Annual Report 2015/6**

**\*Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

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## Foreword: Chair of Devon SACRE

It has been an enormous privilege to serve as Chair of Devon SACRE during the year 2015/16 and to continue to be part of the work of supporting RE in Devon. I would like to thank Ed Pawson and Jeremy Roberts for their work leading SACRE and supporting the place of RE in our schools. It is a time of great change in education, seeming to bring confusion, challenge and opportunity in equal measure! SACRE is keen to continue to provide support to teachers across the county, as many schools become academies, funding tightens, curriculum patterns shift and changes are made to the way pupil progress is assessed and judged. As a body, Devon SACRE is committed to leading RE forward in a world where Local Authority control is increasingly diminished and where academisation is freeing schools to follow an agreed syllabus, rather than the specific one written by their local SACRE.

We put great importance on the good working relationships we have developed with the faith and belief communities of Devon. We are particularly proud of the way we have been able to work in partnership with Devon Faith and Belief Forum (DFBF) over recent years. Our joint project to train a range of speakers from faith and belief communities, so that pupils in Devon can have access to people who live out the faith or belief they are studying, has been particularly successful. In a world of prejudice and media stereo-types it is more and more important that faith and belief communities work together to help educate young people. The conference for Interfaith Week 2015, organised by SACRE and DFBF, drew teachers and members of diverse faith communities together to discuss the complex issues raised by the Governments' introduction of the British values and Prevent agendas in our schools.

The commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day is always a very significant part of the SACRE year. In 2016, many schools participated in presenting work and sharing experiences. Students took part in tours of Exeter, listened to talks from Leslie Kleinman (a survivor from Auschwitz-Birkenau) and Kemal Pervanic (a survivor of the Bosnian genocide). Educating our young people about the horrors caused by prejudice and discrimination are vitally important and I would like to thank all those involved in the organisation and presentation of these events.

Exam statistics show that the number of Short Course entries has continued to fall, but GCSE entries in Devon continue to be higher than the national average. SACRE would like to congratulate students and staff in Devon schools for all the hard work put into studying for exams. Work has continued this year on Assessment in RE to give staff guidance in assessing RE under new guidelines.

Several respected members of SACRE left during the year and we thank them for their service whilst welcoming new members from faith communities and teaching organisations. In a time of great change in education the work of Devon SACRE continues to be of great importance. The work that we do ensures that the vast majority of students in our schools are given the opportunity to receive high quality Religious Education and that teachers are supported and trained in their work. It is wonderful to have a group of people from so many different backgrounds meeting together to share in this task; I look forward to another great year for Devon SACRE as I pass the Chair's position to another member.

Mary Hext

Chair of Devon SACRE 2015/16

## **Introduction**

Devon SACRE<sup>1</sup> is pleased to produce this report as a summary of its work in Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship in 2015/6. It provides a useful opportunity to reflect on its deliberations over the last year and inform others of its valuable work. SACRE is a unique organization and amidst the challenges and issues we face concerning the place of religion in schools and society, we believe there has never been a more important time for teaching and learning of RE in our schools.

## **1 Devon Agreed Syllabus**

### **1.1 Agreed Syllabus Review and Assessment**

In 2014, we carried out a review of the Agreed Syllabus, and SACRE has been pleased to see that it has been well received. In terms of assessment, the new syllabus recognised that all schools are in the process of reviewing their assessment practices, and so in the absence of clear, national guidelines it was decided that the new Agreed Syllabus would advocate a continuation of level-based assessment for the time being. During the year 2014/5 Devon SACRE set up an assessment working party, to gather evidence and create new guidelines and practices. This work continued through 2015/6, with funds identified in the SACRE development plan in partnership with the Learn, Teach, Lead RE (LTLRE) programme, and advised by Dr Barbara Wintersgill (ex-HMI). Barbara's ground-breaking work on 'Assessment Beyond Levels' has proved to be a very useful foundation for the development of planning and assessing RE. The details of this work and its associated guidance was made available on the LTLRE website.

## **2 Standards in Religious Education**

### **2.1 GCSE Examination Results 2016 – an interpretation of the data**

GCSE entries, as percentage of total cohort

Devon schools: FC 52.6%, SC 17%, Total 69.6%

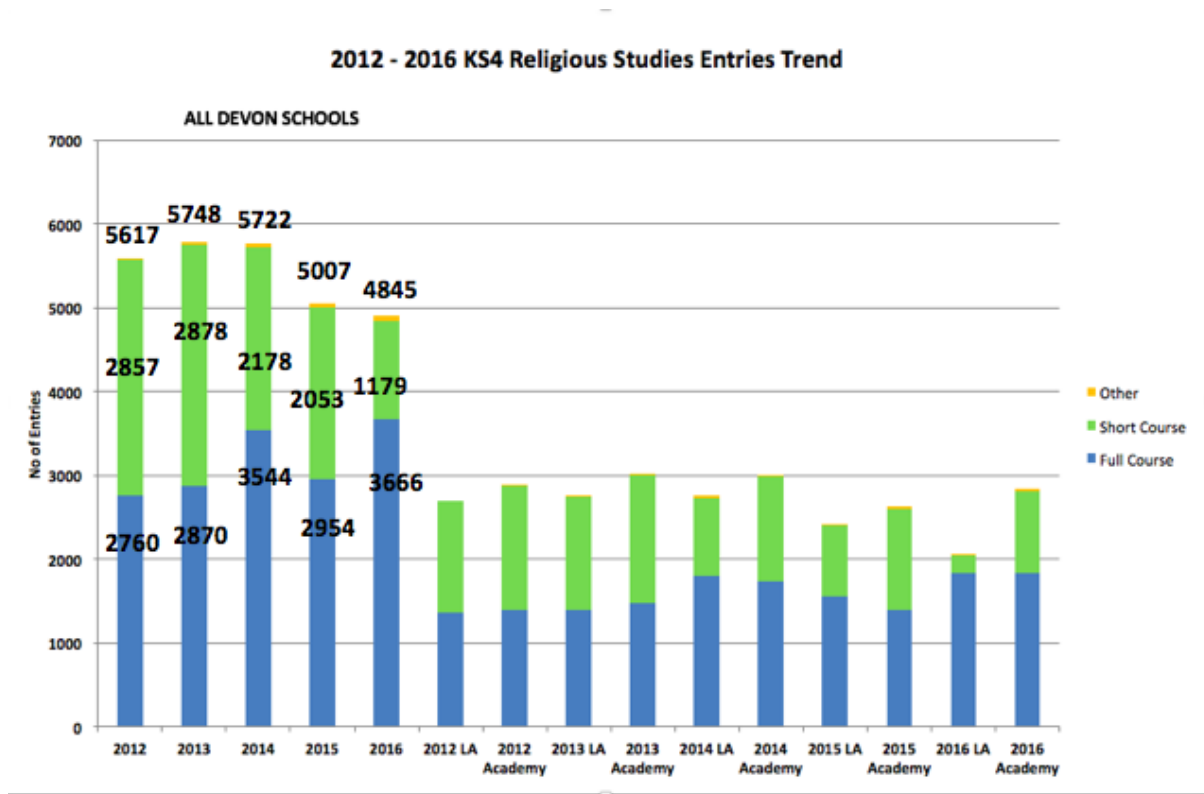
National schools: FC 46.7%, SC 9%, Total 55.7%

#### **Summary**

Although overall entry numbers have dropped over the last 3 years, Devon schools continue to enter significantly more students for GCSE RS exams (full course and short course) than the national average. However, students' grades are generally lower than the national average. This suggests that, with respect to RE, Devon schools are more legally compliant, but the subject is taught with less rigour.

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<sup>1</sup> SACRE stands for Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education



**Chart A: 2012- 2016 GCSE Religious Studies exam entries trends**

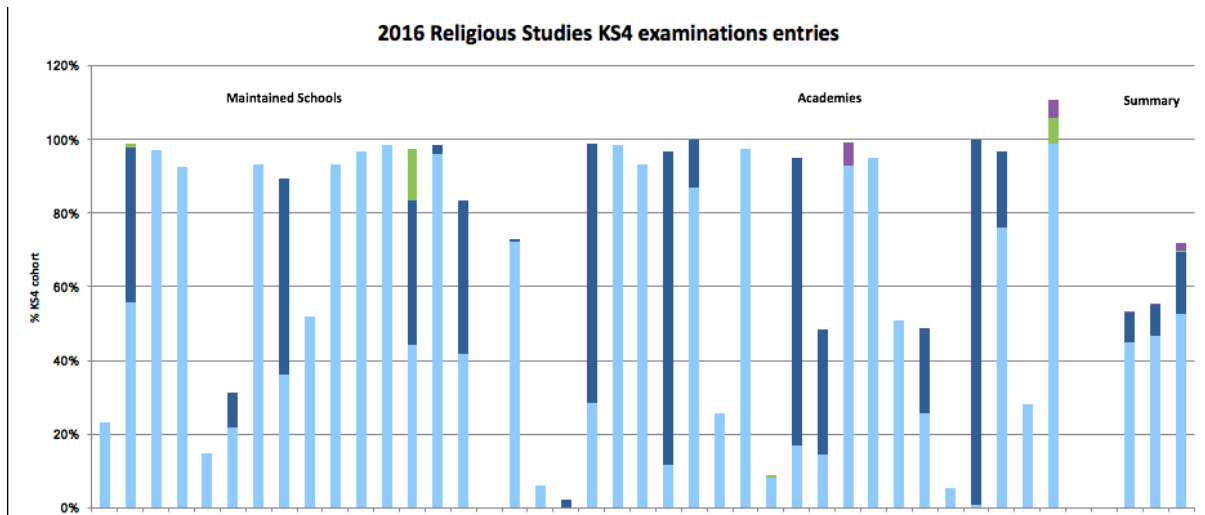
Chart A shows a levelling off in overall GCSE entries in 2016, after a steep decline between 2014 to 2015. It also reveals a very clear shift from students sitting a short course exam, towards taking the full GCSE.

Over recent years the trend has been showing an increasing number of full course (FC) entries in Devon schools. Leaving aside 2014, which seems to have been a bit of an anomaly, in overview, 2016 shows a slow, continuing increase in numbers of entries for FC over a number of years. This increase is in line with the national figures, where FC entries rose from 35% (2013) to 45.7% (2015).

**Short course RS**

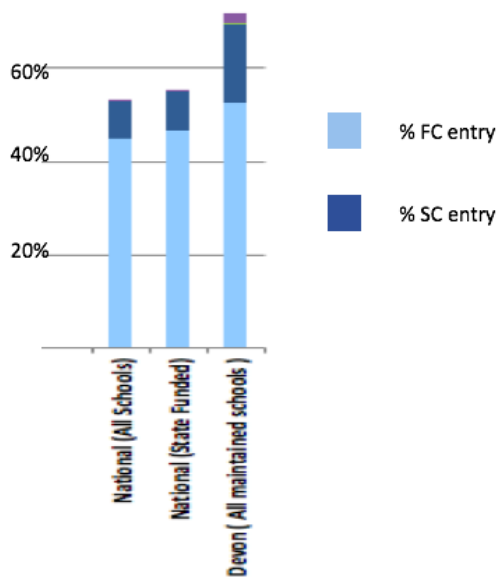
Since 2013 there has been a dramatic falling off in entries for SC in Devon schools. Some schools are clearly moving over from SC to FC, but other schools seem to be dropping RS as a KS4 exam course altogether.

National data shows that SC entries continued to fall in 2015, dropping from 23% (2013) of the Y11 cohort down to 9% (2016). SC entries held up quite well in Devon until 2014. The last 3 years has seen a sudden fall in SC entries, but numbers are still significantly higher than in other parts of the country (Devon 2015: 17%).



**Chart B: GCSE Religious Studies (FC and SC) entries as percentage of cohort (2016)**

Chart B shows that Devon schools continue to use FC and SC RE courses in a variety of ways and curriculum patterns. Four Devon schools entered fewer than 5% students for an RS exam in 2016. This is a concern and has formed the basis of further investigation. These schools have been contacted to request more information and discussion of provision and standards, with some being visited for monitoring purposes.



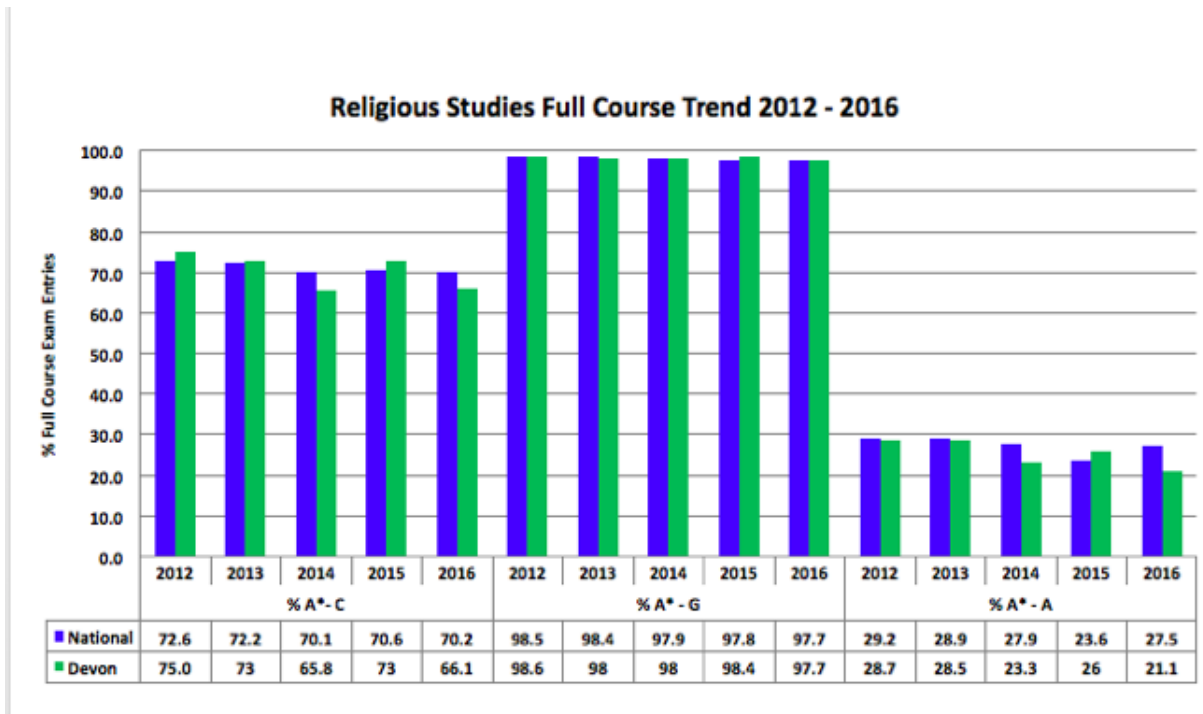
**Chart C: GCSE Religious Studies (FC and SC) entries as percentage of cohort (2016)**

GCSE entries, as percentage of total cohort

Devon schools: FC 52.6%, SC 17%, Total 69.6%

National schools: FC 46.7%, SC 9%, Total 55.7%

Although the number of GCSE entries from students in Devon schools has declined over recent years (see chart A), RS entries remain significantly higher in Devon (69.7%) than the national average (55.7%).

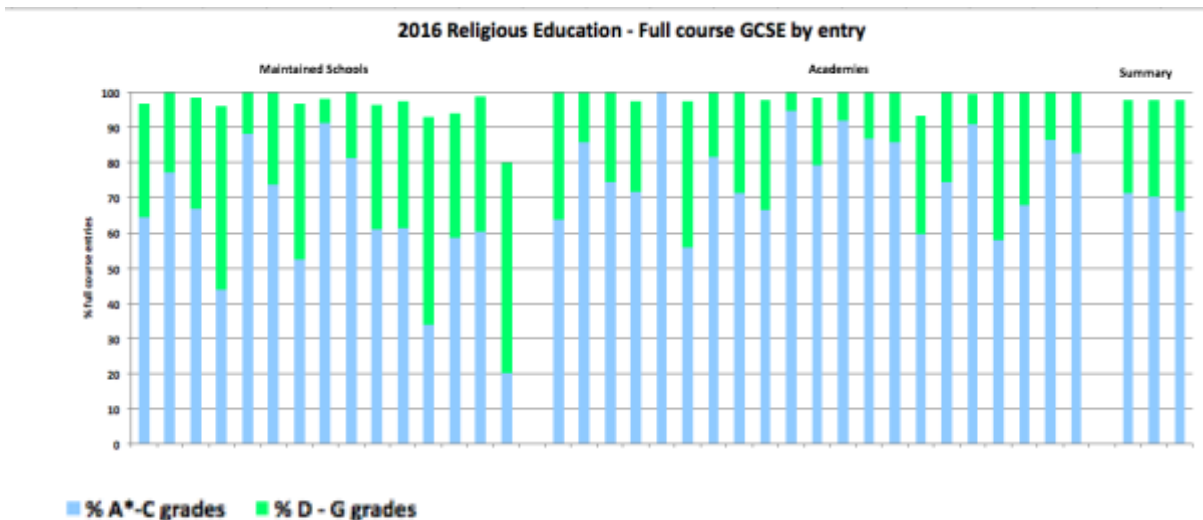


**Chart D: 2012- 2016 GCSE Full course results trends**

A\*-C: National: 70.2%, Devon 66.1%

A\*-A: National: 27.5%, Devon 21.1%

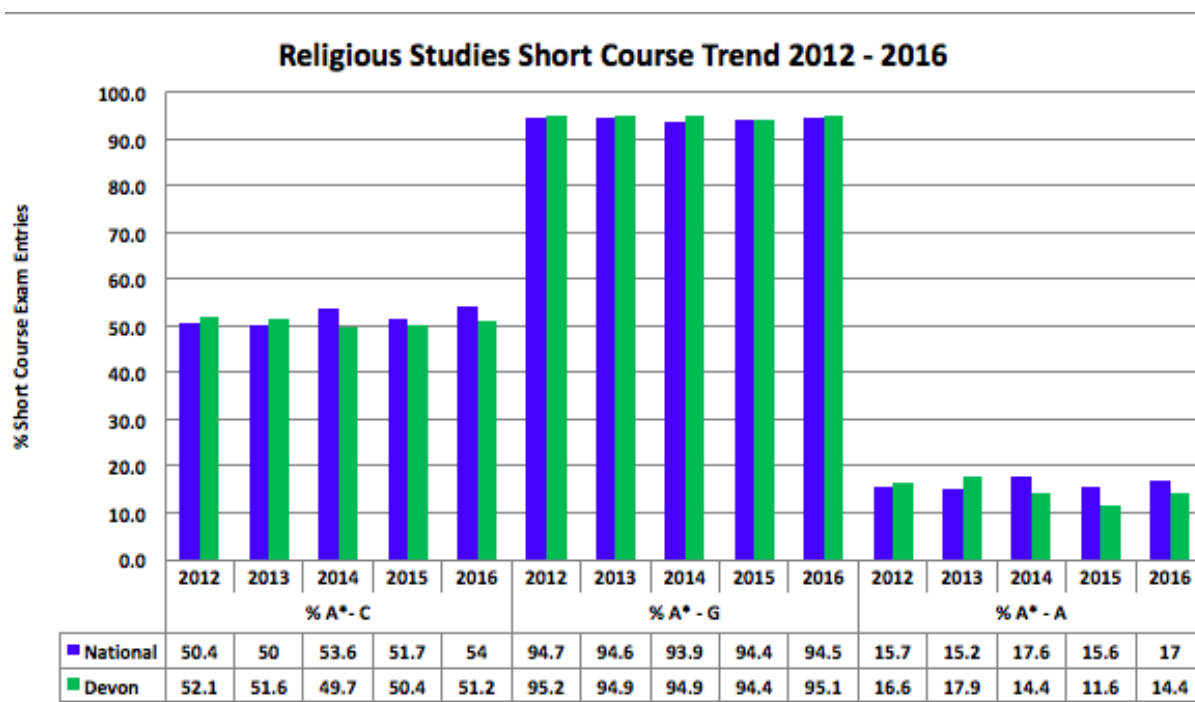
While Devon schools enter more students for FC than the national average, in 2 out of the last three years the achievement of Devon students has been significantly weaker than the national average.



**Chart E: GCSE RS results table 2016.**

Results for individual schools are very variable and it is not easy to draw clear conclusions. Many departments are recording scores in the 80s and 90s, for % A\*-C, which is great, but some of these are only entering small cohorts. Where schools are entering large cohorts their results are often less good. In some cases this reflects the lack of curriculum time allocated to the subject. Two schools had results between 30-45%. These have been

contacted to discuss issues of standards and expectations in the subject, with offers of a SACRE monitoring visit.



**Chart F: 2012- 2016 GCSE short course results trends**

A\*-C: National: 54%, Devon 51.2%

For a third year running, results at SC are below national average. This may reflect the fact that Devon has a larger cohort entry than other areas of the country, but this is not a good trend.

### Commentary

While being pleased with the overall increased uptake for full course RS GCSE examination in our schools (2427 in 2011, up to 3666 in 2016), Devon SACRE remains concerned by the implications of the changing pattern of entries. With so much pressure on both curriculum time and results, many schools are opting to either squeeze RE out altogether or they are entering students for FC instead of SC, often with an insufficient time allocation. On the surface one would imagine that entering more students for a full GCSE in RS (rather than a short course) would be a good thing, but there is evidence that many schools are failing to provide additional time for its study. Recommended study time for FC is 120-140 hours, and where schools are teaching FC on 1 hour a week, this falls far short of the time needed. There is some evidence from Ofsted that this is proving detrimental to students' learning in RE, where, due to the lack of curriculum time, students are required to 'cram' for exam style learning, rather than concentrating on a deeper level of understanding, reflection and discussion. With new GCSEs being introduced in 2016/17 we worry that we will see schools struggling to maintain standards in RS GCSE, given that the level of academic challenge is set to be raised, along with an increased level of content.

In many schools there is a tendency to begin RS GCSE in Year 9 in a bid to extend the number of hours that students can study these courses. Again, it is the opinion of SACRE



that this is not fully acceptable, given that this cuts short the breadth of KS3 experience and begins a course whose content is designed to be followed by a more mature student.

While most schools in Devon are still giving a majority of their students their statutory opportunity to study RE at KS4, there is a growing number of schools who are not offering students their entitlement to develop their religious literacy. This is a matter of significant concern. Data shows that some schools are failing to enter any of their students for RS examinations, and while some may be doing good non-examination RE, it is likely that others will not be. SACRE has asked for these schools to be referred to the monitoring group for possible exploratory visits.

## **2.2 Schools Monitoring Visits**

In 2013/4, Devon SACRE initiated a programme of monitoring visits to secondary schools, specifically to schools where there have been concerns about compliance, time allocation or low examination entry/pass levels for Religious Education. This has continued into the academic year 2015/6. In the schools visited so far there have been positive discussions with students, the teachers in charge of RE and Head Teachers/Senior Leaders. These schools have all shown an appreciation for the support given by SACRE, leading to an expectation of further development of the curriculum opportunities for Religious Education.

Both community schools and academies alike are being approached for these monitoring visits and it is noted that, although academies are not bound by SACRE/LA jurisdiction, there is a willingness to engage with SACRE advice, because it is understood to represent good practice for the creation of high quality RE. In many cases our visits have opened up opportunities for new communication channels, allowing RE teachers to access advice from a wider range of support networks and leading to curriculum developments for RE.

## **2.3 Monitoring Ofsted inspections for RE and SMSC**

In February 2015 Devon SACRE commissioned a report from Dr B Wintersgill, former HMI. SACRE was keen to gain a greater understanding of the extent and quality of Ofsted reports on Devon schools in relation to: Religious Education, collective worship and pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC). Dr Wintersgill's research related to 43 Devon schools inspected between September 2014 and March 2015 and her paper took account of recently revised Ofsted guidance for inspectors which had given a higher profile to Religious Education and its role in school provision for SMSC. It drew comparisons with the findings of a similar evaluation in 2012 and set out key issues arising from her study. A summary of the areas of concern suggested by Dr Wintersgill included the following points:

- i. None of the reports reviewed include a judgement of non-compliance with legislation on RE or collective worship. This is surprising and SACRE will seek corroborating evidence.
- ii. RE was mentioned, usually with no details, in just 12% of primary school reports reviewed. References to RE in secondary school reports appear only in lists of successful or unsuccessful GCSE subjects.
- iii. Very few inspectors exemplify the school's provision of SMSC with reference to the RE curriculum. In spite of the welcome emphasis on tolerance, respect, faith, belief

and cultural diversity in the revised SMSC descriptions, most inspectors ignore these terms.

- iv. Reporting on SMSC remains vague and imprecise. Inspectors use key terms from the SMSC criteria (e.g. 'reflect', 'values', 'appreciation') but without reference to the key contexts (e.g. knowledge and understanding) which give these terms substance.
- v. Only 2 of the 43 reports analysed reported on SMSC with reference to knowledge of beliefs, faiths and cultural diversity as a prerequisite for living in modern Britain.
- vi. With two exceptions the 43 reports give a positive judgement on SMSC but without reference to the revised criteria in the *School Inspection Handbook*. Frequently the 'evidence' given in support of good SMSC is unconvincing. This raises questions about the reliability of inspectors' judgments on SMSC.

The Chair of Devon SACRE wrote to Ofsted to ask for a response and the resultant conversation can be found in full in Appendix 2. In a reply from Bradley Simmons, Regional Director for Ofsted (SW), he states: "I sense your concern about the teaching of religious education in some Devon schools and assume you have written in your role of county adviser to those schools where you believe provision and teaching of religious education is inadequate. If this produces no response, do let me know, so that I may consider this as a factor when planning the inspection of Devon schools... I hope that working together in such a way, we may improve the teaching of religious education in Devon schools."

Devon SACRE intends to act on this, working with Ofsted to improve the teaching of religious education.

### **3 Devon SACRE**

#### **3.1 Membership**

SACRE would like to thank Mary Hext for continuing role as SACRE Chair. We also thank Claire Hulbert for her role as vice-Chair. During the year, we said thanks and goodbye to a number of respected members, including Ian Jamison and Myfanwy McCorry. We welcomed in Helena Hastie (Baha'i), Dr Edgar Mihas (FE rep), Jude Taylorson (Buddhist), Viannah Rain (Pagan), Paul Cornish (Secondary Headteacher) and Dr Geoff Teece (coopted)

#### **3.2 Professional support for SACRE**

SACRE is pleased to have the ongoing advisory support from Ed Pawson, with Jeremy Roberts acting as an additional SACRE consultant. Babcock/LDP continue to provide excellent administrative and logistical support and oversight.

#### **3.3 Holocaust Memorial Day 2016**

Holocaust Memorial Day events in Exeter were again very successful. The theme of the exhibition was *Don't stand by* and this was exemplified in much of the material produced by the 11 schools from across the County who participated in the day. There were opportunities for young people to display exhibition material in the Guildhall and to present drama and dialogue in Southernhay URC.

There were a number of showings of the film “Porajmos: the untold story of the gypsy holocaust”, accompanied by talks from a Gypsy educator and a number of schools took advantage of the guided, reflective walks around the city centre. The Holocaust survivor talk on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan was well attended by members of the public, with speaker Leslie Kleinman, a survivor from Auschwitz-Birkenau, giving a moving account of the cruel events of life under Nazi rule. For the first time we introduced a lunch-time talk for schools. This was a great success, with over 100 students listening intently to Kemal Pervanic, a survivor of the 1992 Bosnian genocide.

### **3.4 Interfaith focus: Faith and Belief visitor training**

SACRE, working alongside Devon Faith and Belief Forum (DFBF), ran two very successful faith and belief visitor training workshops during the year 2015/6. These courses, running over 3 Saturday mornings, have been designed to train individuals from diverse faith and belief communities with the aim of improving the support available for teachers of RE, giving them better access to high quality faith and belief visitors. Overall nearly 20 participants engaged with the course, from diverse community backgrounds: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hindu, Baha’i, interfaith, Christian Science, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Buddhism, Society of Friends etc

Further faith and belief visitor training events are being planned for the coming year and an online directory is being created to allow teachers across the county to gain access to these visitors via email.

### **3.5 Interfaith conference on British values**

SACRE and Devon Faith and Belief Forum (DFBF) were pleased with the success of the conference on British values marking Interfaith Week 2015. The conference focused on issues surrounding the Government’s introduction of British values into the curriculum and drew together schools, teachers and faith groups to discuss its implications. There was also discussion around the Prevent strategy and the need for schools to think carefully about how they protect vulnerable children from being drawn into violent extremism. Presentations from Jonathan Marshall, Ian Jamison and John Hall were very well-received. Following this a plan was drawn up to run a similar conference on education and faith/belief in 2016.

### **3.6 SACRE working groups and publications**

A document giving schools advice on SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) Development has been completed and posted on the Devon SACRE website.

With the abandonment of learning levels, a working party on assessment has been making progress to establish a SACRE assessment policy, supported by exemplars of good practice. This working party has linked with work done by Dr Barbara Wintersgill for LTLRE on Assessment beyond levels. This work will be completed in the next academic year.

### **3.7 Working with other agencies: Learn, Teach, Lead Project (LTLRE)**

Devon SACRE is pleased to continue to support the work of the Learn, Teach, Lead RE Programme, under the leadership of the Programme Director Linda Rudge. This partnership aims to improve the quality of Religious Education teaching, learning and leadership in schools in Devon and Cornwall, in particular trying to reach those schools that have 'unmet needs' in RE. It operates through hub networks, offering training and support for primary and secondary teachers of RE. Each hub holds a termly twilight meeting for primary and secondary teachers, providing opportunities to share best-practice and offer high quality CPD.

SACRE has been kept in touch at every meeting with the development of this programme. This has covered the following issues: quality assurance, the role of PLREs (hub leaders), programme developments, reports on annual conferences and funding agreements. SACRE has agreed to make a £500 per year contribution to this programme over the next two years.

### **3.8 Advice on teaching about Humanism**

In the light of the court ruling (November 2015), where the BHA had challenged the DfE regarding the inclusion of teaching about non-religious worldviews in the GCSE syllabus, SACRE re-asserted the need (as set out in the Agreed Syllabus) for schools to teach about religions and non-religious worldviews in RE. This was explained in the subsequent schools RE newsletter.

### **3.9 RE and preventing violent extremism: Advice for schools in the context of terrorist incidents claiming religious motivation**

Devon SACRE has produced a leaflet, circulated to all schools, to provide guidance in the light of recent terrorist attacks in Paris and the continuing high level terrorist alert. This underlines the need for good religious education and provides material to assist in collective worship, emphasising the importance of respect and tolerance for all faiths and beliefs.

### **3.10 SACRE training on Preventing violent extremism**

In November 2015, we were pleased to host a training event where SACRE members and other interested parties attended a training session given by Steve Shepherd, Operations and Media Consultant from UK Safer Internet Centre. Steve outlined the need for an open and ongoing dialogue in our communities – among children, young people, parents, carers, schools and wider – to ensure that young people have the skills to be critical thinkers online, becoming more resilient to online extremism, whether from groups like Islamic State or far right groups and others.

### **3.11 Understanding Christianity course**

Understanding Christianity has been developed by the Church of England, in a partnership with RE Today, with the aim of helping pupils to become knowledgeable about the Bible, Christian belief and practice. Devon SACRE is pleased to be able to work alongside the Diocese of Exeter to promote the Understanding Christianity course material. This programme is rolling out training for teachers (primary and secondary) to support the

outstanding classroom materials which have been produced by RE Today. Training courses, running over 2 days, have introduced more than 100 local schools to this material, with more courses planned for the coming year.

#### **4 Training and CPD opportunities and provision**

Devon SACRE, through Babcock/LDP, ran the following whole day RE CPD events in 2015/6:

- Primary RE co-ordinators' conference
- Secondary HoDs conference

A number of Devon SACRE members attended the 2016 South West SACRE Conference on "RE: now and in the future".

#### **5 Collective Worship**

There have been no formal complaints about Collective worship in schools and no applications for determinations.

### **APPENDIX 1: MEMBERSHIP OF DEVON SACRE 2016**

#### **Group A: Christian and other religious denominations, not including Church of England.**

13 places: Appointment for four years ending on 30 April 2017

Mrs Karen Chape	Baptist Church
Rev Master Myfanwy McCorry	Buddhist Community
Miss Mary Hext	Methodist Church
Mr Ravi Nathwani	Hindu Community
Ms Caroline Walmsley	Quakers, Religious Society of Friends
Mrs Rosemary Khreisheh	Islamic Community
Mrs Nuala Nation	Roman Catholic Church
Mr Richard Halsey	Jewish Community
Mr Bernard Lane	United Reformed Church
Mr Chaz Singh	Sikh Community
Mr Michael Watson	Baha'i Community
Mr Keith Denby	Devon Humanists
Mr Ian Jamison	Pagan Community

#### **Group B: The Church of England**

6 places: Appointment for four years ending on 30 April 2017

Mrs Tanya Pritchard	Diocesan Board of Education
Ms Claire Hulbert	Diocesan Board of Education
Ms Penny Hammett	Diocesan Board of Education
Mr E Pawson	Diocesan Board of Education

Mrs Tatiana Wilson  
Mr MarkAndrew Dearden

Diocesan Board of Education  
University College of St Mark and St John

### **Group C: Teachers' Associations**

12 places: Appointments for four years ending on 30 April 2017

Mr John Gooddy	Teaching union/ATL
Mrs Lorna Clay	Teaching union/NASUWT
Mrs Wendy Harrison	Teaching union/NUT
Vacancy	Teaching union/Voice
Mrs Sue Shute	RE teachers association/NATRE (secondary)
Mrs Gerry Winnall	RE teachers association/NATRE (primary)
Mr Paul Cornish	Secondary school leaders/SHA
Ms Karen Walshe	Higher Education/ITE/UCU
Vacancy	Further Education/UCU

### **Group D: The Local Authority**

6 places:

Cllr Mr John Berry	County Councillor
Cllr Mrs C Channon	County Councillor
Cllr Mrs P Colthorpe	County Councillor
Cllr A Hannan	County Councillor
Cllr M Squires	County Councillor
Cllr R Younger-Ross	County Councillor

### **Co-opted members**

Up to 6 places: Appointments for two years ending on 30 April 2017

Ms Paula Fletcher  
Mrs Saxon Spence  
Ms Teresa Griffiths  
Mr Jonathan Marshall  
Graham Langtree  
Mr Jeremy Roberts

## Appendix 2: Correspondence with Ofsted

### TEXT OF LETTER TO Ofsted (HMCI) from the chair of SACRE July 2015

Dear Sir Michael

Devon SACRE recently considered from an independent researcher, an analysis of Ofsted Section 5 reports on Devon schools for the period between September 2014 and March 2015. In particular SACRE wanted to know whether there had been any improvement since our last commissioned report in 2012 in the quality of reporting on religious education (RE) and on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

SACRE welcomes the changes in the Handbook *for Inspection*, which has been in use since September 2014. We were pleased to see the introduction of extended guidance on inspecting RE in paragraphs 18 and 152. In particular we welcome the revised descriptions of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their explicit emphasis throughout on the importance of pupils being prepared for life in modern Britain and in this context, the importance of them developing respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We believe that given the national and international issues which our young people are likely to face throughout their lives, the place of RE in the curriculum must be guaranteed.

We have noted that the SMSC guidance does not mention RE by name. However, in the experience of SACRE members, who include governors, head teachers, teachers, advisers and inspectors it would be unusual to find pupils developing knowledge of faiths and beliefs in any depth other than through RE teaching. This conclusion is corroborated by our reading of Section 5 reports as well as Ofsted's excellent publications on RE.

Taking account of the revised guidance we expected to find in Section 5 reports references to RE in four inspection contexts, where relevant.

- a. Non-compliance with legal requirements should be reported (this requirement has not changed from previous inspection guidance)
- b. Reporting on standards and teaching should include a reference to RE where it is a particular strength or weakness of the school
- c. When reporting on leadership and management, inspectors should ensure that 'the curriculum includes a balanced approach to the pupils' RE that is broadly Christian but, where required, takes account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain'.
- d. Reporting on SMSC should include a reference to pupils' understanding of 'different faiths and cultural diversity'. Evidence from Section 5 reports in the past suggests strongly that pupils are unlikely to gain an understanding of 'different faiths and cultural diversity' in schools without good RE provision.

We were disappointed to discover the following:

- vii. None of the reports reviewed include a judgement of non-compliance with legislation on RE or collective worship. This is surprising and SACRE will seek corroborating evidence.
- viii. RE was mentioned, usually with no details, in just 12% of primary school reports reviewed. References to RE in secondary school reports appear only in lists of successful or unsuccessful GCSE subjects.
- ix. Very few inspectors exemplify the school's provision of SMSC with reference to the RE curriculum. In spite of the welcome emphasis on tolerance, respect, faith, belief and cultural diversity in the revised SMSC descriptions, most inspectors ignore these terms.
- x. Reporting on SMSC remains vague and imprecise. Inspectors use key terms from the SMSC criteria (e.g. 'reflect', 'values', 'appreciation') but without reference to the key contexts (e.g. knowledge and understanding) which give these terms substance.
- xi. Only 2 of the 43 reports analysed reported on SMSC with reference to knowledge of beliefs, faiths and cultural diversity as a prerequisite for living in modern Britain.
- xii. With two exceptions the 43 reports give a positive judgement on SMSC but without reference to the revised criteria in the *School Inspection Handbook*. Frequently the 'evidence' given in support of good SMSC is unconvincing. This raises questions about the reliability of inspectors' judgments on SMSC.

We appreciate that inspectors are given limited time to complete their work and that they have many priorities to consider. However, SMSC has always been one of those priorities. Nearly all inspectors write a few lines about SMSC in the school. Our expectations are that their judgements should be based clearly on Ofsted's criteria and that any evidence referred to clearly backs up the judgement.

Devon SACRE asks you to refer the enclosed report to HMI with specialist expertise in RE and SMSC and to give us assurances that:

- i. Section 5 lead inspectors will be updated on the changes relating to RE and SMSC in the revised *Handbook* and the implication of these changes for inspection;
- ii. Inspectors will seek reliable and relevant evidence for pupils being prepared for life in modern Britain. This will include their attitudes of respect and tolerance and their understanding of faiths, beliefs and cultural diversity.
- iii. Where there is evidence that pupils' understanding of faiths, beliefs and cultural diversity is weak or inadequate, inspectors will report on this.
- iv. Where weaknesses in pupils preparation for modern Britain, at all key stages, are consequences of deficiencies in the RE curriculum or of non-compliance with the statutory requirement that RE should be taught to all registered pupils, then this must be reported.
- v. Ofsted's monitoring procedures will include a scrutiny of reporting on SMSC and RE.

Yours sincerely     Mary Hext     Chair of Devon SACRE



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22 July 2015

Ms Mary Hext  
Chair of Devon SACRE  
Devon County Council  
County Hall  
Topsham Road  
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EX2 4QD

**Bradley Simmons HMI**  
Regional Director, South West

Sent by email to: [peter.stiles@devon.gov.uk](mailto:peter.stiles@devon.gov.uk)

Our ref: 329967

Dear Ms Hext

Thank you for your letter of 6 July 2015, setting out an analysis of school inspection reports with reference to reporting on provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision with reference to religious education.

I am pleased to note that the analysis found all school inspection reports evaluated the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The reporting guidance provided to inspectors states that they must include an evaluation of how well the school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination. These matters are also consistently reported on. There is a requirement that inspectors report on the quality of the curriculum and how well the school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Where inspectors consider the teaching of religious education, the school's programme of assemblies and the promotion of tolerance and respect through effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural, the evidence gathered is used to inform an overall judgment on leadership and management and school effectiveness.

We do not operate a compliance checking model of inspection and inspectors would not therefore commonly check and report on either the teaching of religious education or the quality of assemblies. However, they would routinely visit assemblies and religious education or religious study lessons if timetabled during an inspection.

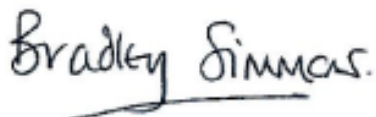
Inspectors are expected to report where these are found to be particularly strong features of a school's practice or where the evidence suggests a cause for concern.

Although your analysis shows spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is consistently reported, I agree the text rarely goes into specific detail. However, this is in the context of an inspection report which, by its very nature, has to be brief, succinct and to the point on a range aspects of the quality of education.

I will forward your letter to my colleagues who deal with inspection policy and development to take into account as they consider future developments in inspection.

Thank you once again for drawing my attention to your findings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bradley Simmons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

**Bradley Simmons HMI**  
Regional Director, South West

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2 September 2015

Mr Ed Pawson  
Adviser to Devon SACRE

**Bradley Simmons HMI**  
Regional Director, South West

Sent by email to: [epawson@thekings.devon.sch.uk](mailto:epawson@thekings.devon.sch.uk)  
And: [peter.stiles@devon.gov.uk](mailto:peter.stiles@devon.gov.uk)

Our ref: 329967 and 332519

Dear Mr Pawson

Thank you for your email dated 20 August 2015 setting out concerns regarding the inspection of religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC).

You state that it is a legal requirement to teach religious education, and thus believe Ofsted should be reporting on compliance in this respect. In recent years we have attempted to make our inspection reports more accessible. Our inspection reports are, by necessity, succinct and focused on a range of aspects of the quality of education. We no longer use standard sentences to report on compliance. However, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that where inspectors do find clear evidence of non-compliance during an inspection, they will report this.

You believe that where religious education is inadequate, then SMSC must be inadequate. This is not necessarily the case. Beyond religious education, there are many and varied elements to SMSC and these will be fully considered by inspectors during the inspection in order to help them reach a rounded judgement.

The new *School inspection handbook* (published August 2015) under the section headed *Inspection of religious education and collective worship* provides clear guidance for the inspection of religious education and collective worship (pages 70-72) and this has been covered in recent training for all inspectors for inspections from September 2015.

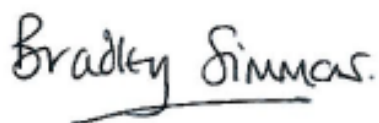
I sense your concern about the teaching of religious education in some Devon schools and assume you have written in your role of county adviser to those schools where you believe provision and teaching of religious education is inadequate. If this produces no response, do let me know, so that I may consider this as a factor when planning the inspection of Devon schools. I am copying this letter to Jennie Stephens, Strategic Director, People and Sir David Carter, Regional Schools Commissioner so that they are aware that I have asked for this information from you.

I hope that, by working together in such a way, we may improve the teaching of religious education in Devon schools.

I will discuss the situation further when I next meet with Jennie Stephens. Perhaps you would seek her approval to join that part of our meeting?

Thank you once again for your email and for bringing your views and concerns to Ofsted's attention.

Yours sincerely



**Bradley Simmons HMI**  
Regional Director, South West

Cc Jennie Stephens, Strategic Director, People, Devon CC  
Sir David Carter, Regional Schools Commissioner, South West  
Karl Sampson, Senior HMI, Ofsted  
Peter Stiles, Senior Committee Secretary, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat, Devon CC

Letter to Bradley Simmons, HMI, Regional Director, South West, Ofsted  
12<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Dear Mr Simmons,

I would like to thank you for your reply to me, sent on 2nd September and apologise for the delay in responding. I have been consulting with a number of other people both locally and nationally to explore this issue further before getting back to you.

In considering why poor provision of RE is not always picked up in inspections, I understand the need for inspection reports to be succinct and accessible and that issues of compliance may not always be uncovered. I am, however, pleased to hear from you that guidance on the inspection of RE has been covered in recent training for inspectors from September

2015 and I would urge you to continue to encourage inspectors to be vigilant with regard to RE provision.

Your suggestion that we should work together more closely provides a very welcome opportunity. We have made monitoring visits to several schools in Devon recently where RE has become an issue. It would be very helpful to be able to open a channel of communication with regional Ofsted personnel to discuss the issue of RE in specific schools where we have reasons to be concerned about standards and provision.

I would very much welcome the opportunity, as you suggest, to meet with you and Jennie Stephens to discuss the way forward. I would also like invite a representative from Ofsted/HMI with responsibility for RE to attend a future meeting of Devon SACRE to gain a better understanding of the work we do.

I am copying this communication to Sir David Carter, because the monitoring of RE and SMSC provision in Devon schools, carried out by Devon SACRE, is of importance in building an understanding of the health of the curriculum in our schools.

Best wishes

Ed Pawson