

GATESHEAD
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021

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Chair's Foreword

I think we are living in very difficult times for education as a whole, what with Covid affecting staff and pupils. Probably we have not gone through a more trying time in the history of modern education. Whereas with reduced staff and pupils I'm sure RE hasn't been quite what it is normally, yet the need for some answers for children has never been so great. We here at Gateshead SACRE are very sympathetic to all of the problems associated with Covid and we wish to be able to offer help wherever it is possible to schools. Overall, we hope that the future will be much better and we thank you all for working so hard in such circumstances.

Thank you.

Reverend Brian Howell

1.0 SACRE Members 2020/21

The membership of the council was:

Brian Howell (Chair)	Church of England
Councillor J McElroy	Gateshead Council
Councillor M Foy	Gateshead Council
Councillor M Hood	Gateshead Council
Councillor P McNally	Gateshead Council
Michael Glickman	Judaism
Kirtida Richardson	Hindu (ISKCON) Educational Services
Christine Ingle	Roman Catholicism
Pastor Bob Adams	Baptist Representative
Vacancy	Islam
Kathleen Farrell	Teachers' Union Representative
Rajwant Nibber	Primary Special School Teacher (Eslington)
Joanne Whitehead	Secondary Special School Teacher (Hill Top)
Jenny Howliston	Primary School Teacher (Front Street)
Stephen Jones	Co-opted
Les Milne (Observer)	Humanism
Julie Latimer	Clerk to SACRE
Jon Ward	LA Education Service

SACRE is working with the LA to recruit more members and increase the representation of local faith communities.

2.0 Supporting RE Teaching

Stephen Jones ran an RE Network for local teachers last year.

The first session, in October 2020, was attended by representatives from 22 schools. There was a mix of Primary and Secondary teachers present. (There are approximately 70 schools which may have attended, but 40% of these are Catholic Schools with their own network.) This network session was a virtual session, because of Covid-19.

This session focussed on looking at what's happening with RE nationally at the moment and sharing key messages in terms of Ofsted and how to be prepared for Ofsted inspections. Schools were reminded of the statutory duty to teach RE and there was some discussion on how to respond to pupils who are withdrawn.

There was some discussion on the structure of the locally agreed syllabus and how that meshes with the recent Ofsted emphasis on curriculum structure.

A number of resources were shared with teachers and there was discussion on how to make use of video in order to have 'visitors' from different faiths despite restrictions on social contact.

The Spring term focussed on 'Reflection' which is a key part of the locally agreed syllabus and teachers worked together to produce 'Big Questions' – questions for which Google cannot produce satisfactory answers. There was also discussion on good ways to address questions which are raised by children.

In the Summer term there was a focus on another aspect of the locally agreed syllabus – ‘Explore’, as well as discussion of assessment of RE. There was discussion about how children become literate in religious issues generally and there was a section of time devoted to developing subject knowledge of teachers in Hinduism and looking at teaching resources to support the teaching of Hinduism.

3.0 Communicating with schools

As decided previously we did not send out a termly newsletter to schools this year. Rather, we relied on the LA’s RE subject letter to communicate issues of importance to schools in the summer term.

4.0 Monitoring of RE provision

Previously the Chair of SACRE sent letters to several local secondary schools whose websites did not clearly express how they were fulfilling their statutory duties in teaching RE to all pupils. Two of these letters did not get full responses so the Chair sent out reminder letters to the Head Teachers of these two schools, with offers of support, in October 2020. One school responded with a description of their RE provision. This has resolved the issue in their case. The other school has not responded yet so we will follow this up again.

5.0 Examination Data Analysis 2021 outcomes

We are in the same situation as last year. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent cancellation of public examinations in the summer of 2021, there is no results-based accountability for schools this year. The DfE has decided not to release the teacher assessments which replaced examinations. We considered writing to schools to gather this information but decided against this, partly because the outcomes would not be comparable with previous years. We therefore have no examination data to analyse.

6.0 National links

Gateshead SACRE has been affiliated to NASACRE for many years and we value the input we get from this body. Stephen Jones attended the NASACRE conference this year. This was held online and 190 people participated. SJ shared a copy of the summary report. The key topics discussed were about Authority in RE. It was very interesting day and considered both core religions and non-religious groups.

The first keynote speaker was Denise Cush, who was the first female professor of RE in the UK in 2003. She gave a broad overview of how we teach Authority in RE and gave lots of links to useful resources.

The second keynote speaker was Richard Kueh, Ofsted’s subject lead for Religious Education, he outlined how the quality of RE education will be inspected within the 2019 Education Inspection Framework. He discussed RE as a journey and we need to ensure that there is clear progression in our curriculums from a starting point to an end point.

The day also included various workshops with delegates. It was a valuable day but would have been even better if the conference had been held face to face, as there had been a number of technical issues which disrupted the flow of training.

7.0 Self assessment

Work on categorising resources for posting on a shared area stalled during the disruption due to Covid and this needs to be re-addressed.

There have been attempts to review and refresh membership of SACRE committees but this has proved problematic and needs to be completed.

Network sessions were well received.

8.0 Action plan for 2021-22

This Action Plan focusses on supporting teachers, communications and on analysis of examination data.

Successful implementation will be reliant on the active engagement of SACRE members, the school community, and the School Improvement Team.

Monitoring will be a standing item at SACRE meetings.

SACRE Action Plan 2021/22				
Action	By when	By whom	Intended outcome	Progress Monitoring
1. Analyse secondary school data (summer 2022)	Within 4 weeks of data becoming available	LA Officer	Performance in revised examination arrangements reviewed Issues identified	Item on SACRE agenda
2. Continue to develop the SACRE space on the new Learning Platform or other location. This item is continued from last year.	Review and revamp teaching and learning resources in the Autumn term initially and add/post these resources as they become available	Working party	Key documents including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes • SACRE Newsletters • Action Plan • National Reports • Guidance booklets • Material to support schools relating to SACRE will be available for schools and other users to access 	Item on SACRE agenda
3. Review of committee representation	Autumn term 2021 Spring term 2022	SACRE chair and vice chair. All SACRE members LA	SACRE membership represents major faiths and world views	Item on SACRE agenda
4. Support a local RE Network for teachers.	Autumn 2021	SACRE members	Teachers offer mutual support in raising the quality of RE education. SACRE finds out the issues facing schools regarding teaching RE and about items of interest to include in the newsletter.	Item on SACRE agenda
5. Consider supporting a regional RE Conference	Autumn term	SACRE members	Support local schools to deliver high quality RE Stronger links with local schools.	Item on SACRE agenda
6. Monitor, and challenge where necessary, RE provision in secondary schools. This item is continued from last year.	Autumn term 2021 and Spring term 2022	LA Officer and Chair	Improved access to RE for secondary students.	Item on SACRE agenda