

**Leicester City Council
Standing Council on Religious Education
(SACRE)**

Annual Report 2020-21



Introduction from the Chair

Leicester SACRE is made up of a wide variety of people, including many volunteers, all of whom strive together to serve the people of Leicester. It is largely representative of the diversity of the population of Leicester and its outstanding characteristic is unity in diversity. This enables it to perform its statutory functions and promote community cohesion in our city. It is ably supported by the vital contributions of our clerk, Farida Mansoor and our Consultant RE Adviser, Wendy Harrison. During 2020-21 Leicester SACRE faced two major challenges. The first of these was its depleted funding level which directly affected the amount of time for which its Consultant RE Adviser could be employed. The second was Covid-19 and the lockdown which closed schools for a large part of the spring term. Despite these challenges the Leicester SACRE successfully met online regularly. It also heard five applications for determinations from local schools who felt that acts of Collective Worship that are broadly Christian in nature would not be suitable for their pupil body. In doing this the Leicester SACRE always listens attentively and supports the school in providing meaningful and appropriate acts of Collective Worship. Where help is needed this is given. Although Covid-19 was affecting education, Wendy Harrison was able to assure us that schools were providing a broad curriculum that included RE. During the summer term Wendy gave us some training on the May 2021 research review from Ofsted on RE. In addition, SACRE has pursued other initiatives. We applied for funding from Closing the Gap. It was unsuccessful on this occasion but further applications for external funding are in the pipeline. Links have been forged with The Leicester Schools Peace Project and we are hopeful that this will result in some innovative plans for action during the next few years. Finally, many thanks to Seema Ahmad for all the hard work she did as Chair in 2019/20. Many thanks also to Yolanda Morley-Mckay who was appointed as chair during the autumn term and has given her unstinting service.

Stephanie Maude
Chair of Leicester SACRE
April 2021

Background Information

The Education Reform Act (1988) established compulsory Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACRE) in all Local Authorities (LAs). The main function of a SACRE is to advise the LA on matters connected with RE and collective worship. SACREs also oversee the five-yearly revision of the locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education (RE) and consider any complaints about the provision and delivery of RE and collective worship referred to it by the LA.¹

The membership of SACREs comprises four groups, together with nominated Advisers. The groups are:

Committee A: Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations

Committee B: The Church of England

Committee C: Teachers' Associations

Committee D: The Local Authority.

[Please see Appendix, p.11 for membership of Leicester SACRE 2020-21]

Also in attendance at Leicester SACRE meetings

Farida Mansoor: Clerk

Melanie Gaiderman: LA

Allan Hayes: Co-opted Humanist member

Wendy Harrison: Consultant RE Adviser

Meetings and Membership

Leicester SACRE met six times during 2020/21 – in September and November 2020, in January, March, May and June 2021. Due to the Covid-19 meetings took place via Microsoft Teams.

Autumn Term 2019

Chair and Vice-Chair appointment

Yolanda Morley-Mckay (YMM) and Stephanie Maude (SM) were appointed as Chair and Vice - Chair respectively for the next two years. Seema Ahmad was thanked for all the work she had done as Chair.

Funding

Leicester SACRE continues to try and meet its responsibilities despite the significant cuts to funding. The Consultant RE Adviser (WH) reported that the most recent bid for extra funding had been rejected by Councillor Elly Cutkelvin and Sue Welford. WH would look into other ways of securing funding from external sources. YMM suggested that it was time to move to a place of acceptance about the LA budget and put SACRE's efforts into being creative in terms of generating income and bringing RE to the forefront again. There was general agreement about this – decisions would be made during future meetings about which aspects of the action plan should be prioritised. It was agreed that SACRE would bid for funding from external sources whenever there was the opportunity to do so. Melanie Gaiderman (MG) suggested that an application be made to the 'Closing the Gap' (CtG) initiative. This covers a variety of projects and initiatives, funded by Leicester's maintained primary schools from the de- delegated fund. One SACRE member is a member of

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281929/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf

the CtG group and was able to provide more detailed information about how the funding process works. She explained that the group works collaboratively to identify common needs and priorities for the city's schools and then commissions work accordingly. At the time of discussion a key strand was Black Lives Matter, which could be interpreted within the context of BAME. Links could be made with SACRE's action plan, for instance, 'Engaging With Faith Communities'. WH agreed to submit an application.

During the autumn term NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) sent a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to all LAs regarding the funding of SACREs. It was agreed that this was very timely, given the circumstances of Leicester SACRE.

Request from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to join Leicester SACRE

It was explained that the Ahmadiyya Muslims are different to mainstream Sunni Muslims and are sometimes deemed controversial by them. However, they are part of the local community and have the right to be represented. Members agreed to this request.

The Leicester Hebrew Congregation (LHC)

The LHC continues to develop its Education Resource Centre, financed by the National Heritage Fund. Part of the terms and conditions require them to show that they are in contact with other faiths and community groups. Sandra Cohen (from the LHC) asked for SACRE's help with this. Members were encouraged by the support to schools offered by the new Resource Centre.

Determinations – update from NASACRE

Members were informed that NASACRE had requested a period of grace for schools in terms of determination renewals, due to the COVID situation. NASACRE advised that: 'Although the DfE has reminded us that technically, there is no legal period of grace (there has been no change in or relaxation of legislation) in the current circumstances, it would be reasonable for administrative reasons for LAs/SACREs to allow those schools that may have been due for reconsideration during lockdown or are due for reconsideration this term, a little longer - for example, until the end of autumn term - to submit their renewal applications'.

Schools update

WH reassured members that overall, schools are continuing to offer a broad curriculum which includes RE. The monitoring inspections carried out by Ofsted during this term have confirmed this. YMM confirmed that the same was true in church schools. All agreed that it has been a challenging time for teachers who have had to cover for absent colleagues, prepare online teaching etc. during a very stressful time.

Membership updates

YMM explained that SACRE membership works on the basis that it represents local faith communities, with people being able to commit and importantly, to have a good discourse. WH went through the composition of the different committees and said that overall the balance in terms of representation was good. However, vacancies remained in the following groups: Sikh, Roman Catholic, teachers' and C of E. Every effort would be made to fill these vacancies.

Spring Term

Determination updates

Following information given out during the autumn term NASACRE released further updates from the DfE. In summary, it would be considered reasonable for a school to rely (for the present) on their most recent determination. It would be very unlikely that a parent would challenge this arrangement, given the circumstances. It was clear from this that there was no pressure for schools to renew their determination and that they could continue to rely on their current one for the time being. However, if a school was in the position to move forward then they could do so.

WIRE (Widening Inclusivity in Religious Education) Project- moving forward

For the benefit of new members WH provided some background information about the project. The generic document had been re-written by a group of SACRE members to provide a Leicester context. The general response was that due to the stressful times schools were currently facing it might be better to postpone the WIRE launch until the autumn term. However, it would be useful if the information could be sent out to schools in the summer term in order to help with planning.

Closing the Gap (CtG) bid update

WH updated new SACRE members about the funding situation, i.e. cuts imposed some time ago had restricted its work and impact. After consultation with members a bid had been submitted for Closing the Gap funding, linked to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) strand. WH had been asked to amend the initial bid and in response produced one with a clearer focus. This bid, for £10,000, was submitted on the 14th of January. If successful it would allow WH to work with SACRE members and teachers to develop new exciting resources to help schools to move forward in the way they teach about BLM.

Response to the NASACRE FOI request

WH looked into the LA's response to the FOI request. She reported that the figures in the response were consistent with an email sent by SA in 2019. NASACRE will publish their analysis at some point and this will be key in terms of knowing whether Leicester SACRE is underfunded in comparison with other SACRES.

Determination Presentation: Wyvern Primary School

The headteacher, Debbie Sedgwick (DS), presented her school's determination via PowerPoint. She talked members through aspects of the application form to give members a sense of the character of Wyvern PS. She also shared some of the children's reflective comments from collective worship. DS talked about the work of an artist commissioned to work with Wyvern pupils. This artwork illustrates their views on their place in the world and in Leicester. During this project the children were given opportunities to talk about different places that were important to them, including places of worship. DS explained that all children lead assemblies at some point of the year. They celebrate festivals related to most of the major faiths. Pre-COVID parents were invited to attend the assemblies and this usually resulted in a good turnout with very positive feedback. Parents' responses to the letter about the determination had reflected some confusion around RE and collective worship which she would try to address. DS explained that she was aware that the determination was not about religious education (RE) but sometimes it was appropriate to make links. DS explained that the children play a key role in leading collective worship so

they are always mindful of its spiritual nature and links to their well-being. Members commented that children's reflective remarks were evidence of the school's success.

Members discussed the presentation. It was suggested that the headteacher's comment, 'Children can pray to their own God' could be misconstrued. WH explained that DS was simply trying to make a point about inclusivity and the fact that the school does not promote any one particular religion. It was unanimously agreed to approve the determination.

New Project: Leicester Peace Project- 'How do we remember war in Leicester?'

Andrew Bolton and Saffron Gallup introduced themselves and gave a presentation to provide the background to the project. They explained that the project would be in three parts. Part one: they would write to all schools in Leicester to encourage them to hold a peace week during summer 2021. Part 2: how Leicester should remember war - reference was made to local links and to the white poppy which is a symbol of peace as well as a remembrance of all victims of wars. Part 3: Andrew and Saffron would be writing an article in RE Today about the project. Members fed back positively and looked forward to seeing the project up and running. Andrew clarified that it is a pilot project which is being started in Leicester to establish networks but would eventually be taken nationwide. He explained that going forward, it will be helpful for faith groups to articulate their own position about war and peace, rather than others doing it from secondary sources. These can then be shared with teachers.

Annual Report (AR)

This was presented to members. It was pointed out that due to COVID the report did not contain any examination data.

Summer term:

Determinations

Linden Primary School: Initial discussion/questions

WH said there appeared to be some confusion between RE and collective worship (CW) and this seems to be the case across many schools. This was reflected in some responses from Linden parents. The headteacher is aware of the difference but it appears that further clarification is needed for parents. WH to emphasise this when sending out the initial letter to schools. It was not clear from the application which themes are covered every day nor what would happen if some parents requested the continuation of broadly Christian worship for their child - how would the school accommodate this?

Presentation

The headteacher, Zaheer Mohamed (ZM) gave a PowerPoint presentation to show how the school fulfils the requirements of the law and also, more broadly, meets the spiritual and cultural needs of pupils. He included positive comments from parents who were in favour of renewing the determination. He spoke about the themes in CW that cover spirituality, tolerance and reinforcing the whole school ethos. He explained that CW takes place in a variety of ways including whole school, phase groups, individual classes, etc. His presentation showed a selection of the festivals celebrated by the pupils and performances put on by the school. He accepted that there were some families who did not support the application. He would contact these families and have a dialogue with them to establish what they needed in order to feel included. ZM was asked about collective worship in classrooms and how

these are monitored. He explained that the school has a very comprehensive monitoring and evaluation schedule that has a range of activities which take place throughout the year. This includes collective worship. The school's assembly timetable identifies when/where CW will take place and there is a 'thought of the week' for pupils to focus upon.

SACRE unanimously agreed to renew the determination.

Charnwood Primary School: Discussion/questions

It was felt that the determination was very clear in terms of how the school structures collective worship (CW). Also there is a very clear to the commitment to the whole school ethos. WH commented that this is a school where some SACRE members have attended assemblies -these have always been of a very high standard, demonstrating true inclusivity.

Presentation

The headteacher, Nazma Jassat (NJ) provided members with background information about the school and its values and vision. She spoke in detail about CW which they refer to as 'special time'. This involves each class coming together at some point during the day to fulfil the aims of CW which she listed. The children are also given some time for silent reflection and given the opportunity to record their thoughts and feelings through writing. NJ clarified that they have timetabled CW every day. The teacher decides exactly when CW takes place. Members asked how monitoring of assemblies is carried out. The RE co-ordinator collects the CW forms (which outline what has taken place) and watches recordings of the assemblies then feeds back to the teachers. Previous monitoring showed that not enough time was given for special time and as a result improvements were made.

SACRE unanimously agreed to renew the determination.

Catherine Infant School: Discussion/questions

For background information, WH reported that the school was inspected just before lockdown and had a deep dive in RE. They were judged to be outstanding, with positive feedback received about SMSC and collective worship. Members were impressed with the high quality of the application.

Presentation

The headteacher Jill Harrold (JH) and deputy head Mitesh Madaw presented their school's determination through a PowerPoint presentation. JH explained what CW in their school means to teachers and the children, stressing their multi-faith approach and inclusivity. They have a weekly theme for collective worship. The school makes a clear distinction between CW and assemblies to their children through using a range of resources.

SACRE unanimously agreed to renew the determination.

Herrick Primary School: Discussion/questions

WH was pleased that the school was presenting their determination despite having been under a great deal of pressure under lockdown. Some members agreed that there seemed to be some confusion between RE and CW. This had also been the case at the time of the last application. Some concerns were raised around the comments from some parents regarding teaching about faith at the school. Members felt that some of the same previous mistakes had been repeated.

Presentation

The headteacher Umesh Patel (UP) and Assistant headteacher Arzu Aydin (AA) presented their school's determination on PowerPoint. They gave details of the school's vision and values. AA explained that CW is very important in the way it contributes to school's ethos. CW is a time for sharing common aims and values, celebrating achievements and special times, exploring the world together and developing a community spirit. They explained that CW integrates a 'theme for the week' approach which is carried through class, phase and whole school assemblies. UP and AA both monitor the assemblies by observing them. It was raised that some of their parents do not appear to want the school to include a religious dimension. AA responded that no children have been withdrawn from RE or CW.

From the application it was clear that parents are very supportive of the school continuing with a multi-faith approach, but there did seem to be some confusion between RE and CW. Members felt the presentation was very confusing and some questions were not answered with clarity. It was agreed not to approve Herrick PS determination at the present time. WH to follow up issues raised with the school.

SACRE Training

WH gave a PowerPoint presentation on the recent research review from Ofsted on RE (May 2021). The purpose of the research was to identify factors that contributed to a high quality RE curriculum including teaching and learning; the curriculum and assessment. Ofsted will use this research to examine further how RE is taught. The review has led to some anxiety in terms of teachers questioning whether they need to re-design their RE curriculum. This is not the case. There was also some anxiety on the part of some primary school teachers who do not have detailed subject knowledge. It was noted that in this sense, the review does appear to have something of a secondary school bias. It was asked how much of the report connects to GCSE and A level RE. WH explained that what Ofsted wants schools to prepare pupils for more vigorous learning but not just for examinations. The report stresses the need for pupils to have good understanding of a number of religions as well as deeper concepts and themes. WH made it clear that it raised huge concerns, i.e. there are limited resources to put into practice the recommendations of the report.

Closing the Gap (CtG) Budget update (See Spring term)

WH reported that since her last communication she had not received any further updates. It should therefore be assumed that SACRE had not been successful with this bid. The point was made that it was disappointing that there had not been any response or feedback from the CtG committee, especially considering the amount of work that went into the bid.

The Agreed Syllabus (AS) and collective worship

SACRE cannot be certain how effectively schools are following the AS because due to cuts in funding the Consultant RE Adviser does not have time to monitor this effectively. The present syllabus will need a significant review in 2024. No monitoring of collective worship takes place. Schools do contact the Consultant RE Adviser for advice on RE and collective worship. Her role is now more reactive than proactive.

Determinations

This aspect of collective worship is monitored in the sense that schools are followed up every five years and follow a formal process to have their determinations renewed (within Covid guidelines).

Training for teachers and SACRE

The time allocated to the Consultant RE Adviser is not sufficient for her to provide CPD for teachers. Training for SACRE members, e.g. Ofsted updates, takes place during meetings.

Links with other bodies

Leicester SACRE maintains its links with national bodies such as NASACRE, AREIAC and the REC as well as local faith community groups and organisations.

Appendix
Membership and attendance of Leicester SACRE 2020-21

Composition of SACRE

Group A		Christian denominations and other religions (excluding Church of England)
Group B	up to 7 Members	Church of England
Group C	up to 7 Members	Teacher Associations
Group D	up to 7 members	Local Authority (LA)

SACRE A

Baha'i	Stephanie Maude
Free Evangelical	Pastor Brian Niblock
Hindu	Dipak Kumar Fakey
Hindu	Hiten Bhatt
Hindu	Vibhooti Acharya
Methodist	Stephen Thompson
Muslim	Seema Ahmad
Quakers	Anne Fishenden
Salvation Army	Jean Denton

SACRE B

Church of England	Elizabeth Wayne
Church of England	Jill Carr
Church of England	Yolanda Morley McKay
Church of England	Kim Peake

SACRE C

CLARET Secondary	Jill Patterson
NAHT Primary	Nazma Jassat
NATRE Primary	Nausheen Aziz
NUT/NEU Primary	Emma Wright
	Mayuri Parekh

SACRE D

LA	Cllr Deepak Bajaj
LA	Cllr Ruma Ali
LA	Manjula Sood
LA	George Ballantyne
LA	Melanie Gaiderman

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Humanist	Allan Hayes
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Record of Attendance of Members of the Leicester City SACRE

Group A

Faith	Name	24/09/19	13/11/19	15/01/20	05/03/20	18/06/20
Baha'i	Mrs Stephanie Maude	-	P	P	P	P
Free Evangelical	Pastor Brian Niblock	-	-	-	P	-
Hindu	Dipak Fakey Kumar	P	P	A	P	P
Hindu	Hiten Bhatt	-	-	-	-	-
Hindu	Vibhooti Acharya	A	-	-	A	-
Methodist Church	Stephen Thompson	P	P	P	P	P
Muslim	Seema Ahmad	P	P	P	P	P
Quakers Religious	Ann Fishenden	P	P	P	P	A
Salvation Army	Jean Denton	P	P	P	P	A

Group B

Faith	Name	24/09/19	13/11/19	15/01/20	05/03/20	18/06/20
Church of England	Elizabeth Wayne	P	P	P	A	A
Church of England	Jill Carr	P	A	P	P	A
Church of England	Yolanda Morley-McKay	A	P	A	P	P
Church of England	Kim Peake		P	A	A	P

Group C

Teacher Association	Name	24/09/19	13/11/19	15/01/20	05/03/20	18/06/20
CLARET and NATRE	Jill Patterson	A	A	P	A	P
NAHT Primary	Nazma Jassat	A	A	P	P	A
NATRE Primary	Nausheen Aziz	-	P	A	A	-
NUT/NEU Primary	Emma Wright	-	-	-	-	-
Secondary	Mayuri Parekh				A	A

Group D

Members from the Local Authority	24/09/19	13/11/19	15/01/20	05/03/20	18/06/20
Cllr Deepak Bajaj	-	-	A	-	P
Cllr Ruma Ali	A	P	A	-	-
George Ballantyne	P	P	P	P	P
Manjula Sood	P	P	P	P	P
Melanie Gaiderman	-	-	A	-	-

Co-opted Non-Voting

Faith	Name	24/09/19	13/11/19	15/01/20	05/03/20	18/06/20
Humanist	Allan Hayes	-	P	P	-	-

Visitors


School/Establishment	Name	24/09/19	13/11/19	15/01/20	05/03/20	18/06/20
Headteacher Mellor PS	Nik Foster		P			
Headteacher Mellor PS	Asif Esat		P			
Headteacher Shenton PS	Gita Patel				P	
Assistant Headteacher Coleman PS	Rebecca Pickard				P	

Key to Attendance:

P Present

A Absent with apologies

– Absent

 Attended for a session to present determinations or an item on the Agenda / observer / new member or resigning member