

# **Medway Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report for 2020/2021**

## **1. Chair's introduction**

I am pleased to introduce the Medway SACRE Annual Report for the financial year 2020/2021.

SACRE met twice during this financial year on 20 November 2020 and 18 March 2021. Both meetings were held online. The planned meeting for 18 June 2020 was cancelled due to the pandemic.

As GCSE and GCE A level examination results were assessed by teachers no rigorous analysis is possible making comparisons with figures from previous years as well as national averages and so has not been undertaken for this report.

Because of ongoing national and local lockdowns and the closure of schools, no face-to-face training for groups of schools, both academies and local authority schools, has taken place during the year 2020/2021. However, contact has been maintained with schools through locally produced RE newsletters and informally via email.

SACRE's work is only made possible by the generous financial support of Medway Council who recognise the positive value that well-delivered and well-resourced religious education can bring to pupils. SACRE continues to benefit from its partnership with the different faith groups on the SACRE, the Anglican Rochester Diocesan Board of Education and Rochester Cathedral.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow members of SACRE who have given of their time voluntarily and ensured that Medway has had a strong, quorate council at all its meetings. The professional support of our consultant, Ian Hartland, a former HMI, is also gratefully acknowledged. SACRE remains committed to the delivery of first-class religious education in all the area's schools.

Cllr Trevor Clarke  
Chairman of Medway SACRE

## **2. Advice to statutory bodies**

- a) The SACRE has not offered any specific advice to the local authority.
- b) The SACRE continues to offer advice to schools. This has been achieved by different means.
  - The SACRE continues to publish separate primary and secondary newsletters usually in March, June and November each year although fewer were sent out over the period of this report. They usually contain local and national news relating to religious education, collective worship and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. They often include reviews of books for teachers, national reports on religion and belief, RE and collective worship and suitable resources such as DVDs and websites. Examples of some resources reviewed are mentioned in Appendix A on page 6. The newsletter is sent to all RE subject leaders in local authority and other schools, including academies, in the local area. It is also available on the SACRE section of the local authority's website.

- The SACRE continues to enable the RE consultant to undertake work with schools which can include, at no charge to the schools:
  - a review of a school's provision for RE and collective worship which results in a brief written report sent solely to the school. SACRE members receive an anonymised version of the report.
  - a shorter discussion (of around two hours) with individual RE subject leaders about their school's provision for RE.
  - advice via email or the telephone.
- Although most local secondary schools, along with a few primary schools, have become academies, the Medway SACRE provides advice and support to both local maintained schools as well as academies in the Medway area.

c) The SACRE has not offered any specific advice to the government or other statutory bodies.

### **3. Standards and quality of provision of RE**

- a) The SACRE does not regularly collect information about attainment in RE from its schools apart from the results of public examinations in secondary schools.
- b) The SACRE has only limited information about the quality of RE provision in schools in addition to the information about the outcomes of public examinations in secondary schools. The SACRE does not make local-authority-wide checks on the extent to which all schools comply fully with the legal requirements for RE. Information mostly comes from any visits made to schools each year by the RE consultant, informally from staff at the local schools and contact with RE subject leaders on the SACRE. Very little information is provided in current Ofsted reports about RE or collective worship in the local area. The SACRE continues to believe that it is a matter of considerable regret that Ofsted no longer makes rigorous checks on the extent of compliance with statutory requirements for RE and collective worship when schools, especially secondary schools, are inspected.
- c) There have been no withdrawals from RE in schools that have been brought to the attention of the Medway SACRE.
- d) There have been no complaints about RE in schools that have been brought to the attention of the Medway SACRE.

## **4. The local Agreed Syllabus for RE**

The new Medway Agreed Syllabus for RE was finalised and issued in November 2018. Some key features of the new Agreed Syllabus are:

- The introduction of a new, single, principal aim for RE which seeks to incorporate the twin aims of *learning about* and *learning from* religions.
- The use of end-of-key-stage outcomes instead of level descriptions and attainment targets.

The official launch of the new Medway Agreed Syllabus took place on 11 July 2019 in the crypt in Rochester Cathedral. It was attended by over 20 schools and included six headteachers. There was input from the chairman of the Medway SACRE, the RE consultant and the two local subject leaders who have led training on RE locally. Refreshments were provided.

## **5. Collective Worship**

- a) The SACRE does not make local-authority-wide checks on the extent to which all schools comply fully with the legal requirements for daily collective worship. The SACRE continues to think that Ofsted should make such checks, and report on its findings, during its inspection of schools.
- b) The SACRE has received no requests for a determination in the current year and none at all in previous years.
- c) There have been no complaints about collective worship that have been brought to the attention of the Medway SACRE.

## **6. Management of SACRE**

Membership and training. The two meetings of the SACRE in the year 2020/2021 have been quorate. Training for SACRE members has been mostly undertaken at the full SACRE meetings. This has included:

- discussions about the content of the primary and secondary newsletters,
- updates for SACRE members including, for example, any key information from the Department for Education, the RE Council, NASACRE and AREIAC which is provided by the RE consultant.
- group activities which have included learning about aspects of different world religions.

Members of the SACRE who attend the annual NASCRE meeting report back their experience at a full SACRE meeting.

## **7. SACRE meetings during the year 2020/2021**

There were two meetings during the school year. The planned meeting for 18 June 2020 was cancelled. The following text provides some information about the key matters considered at these meetings. Details about members' attendance are to be found in Appendix B on page 7.

### **First SACRE meeting on 20 November 2020**

- This meeting took place online via Microsoft Teams
- The SACRE meeting started at 4.15pm.
- The meeting began in the usual way, following any apologies, welcomes and introductions, with a brief moment of quiet reflection.
- Minutes from the previous meeting in October 2019 were considered and agreed along with any matters arising.
- Reports were provided by different members of the SACRE. There was an update about work undertaken by the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education with local Church of England schools. Virtual training is being provided and guidance has been provided on resources for teachers whilst learning is taking place remotely. Collective worship has mostly been taking place in class, year groups or 'bubbles' and again the diocese is providing support.
- Two local RE subject leaders, who are SACRE members, gave information about a recent meeting which provided an update for local teachers of RE.
- The RE consultant gave his regular input on relevant local and national developments and on work he is undertaking for the SACRE and local schools. The main areas included were: a consideration of the notion of worldviews; matters to be included in new local RE guidance (which is to accompany the new Agreed Syllabus) and comments on two recent publications for RE teachers.
- The SACRE has worked for some time with The Family Trust and has provided funding for them to create lesson plans for primary schools.

### **Second SACRE meeting on 18 March 2021**

This meeting took place online via Microsoft Teams

- The SACRE meeting started at 4.45pm
- The meeting began in the usual way, following any apologies, welcomes and introductions, with a brief moment of quiet reflection.
- Minutes from the previous meeting in November 2020 were considered and agreed along with any matters arising.
- The two local RE subject leaders, who are SACRE members, gave details of plans for meeting newly qualified teachers (NQTs with the term being changed to Early Career Teachers and so ECTs from September 2021)
- There was an update about the SACRE section of the local authority website which has been in abeyance for some time.
- The RE consultant gave his regular input on relevant local and national developments and on other work he had been doing. As there are ongoing concerns about subject knowledge and expertise among primary teachers and non-subject specialists in secondary schools the newsletters have focused on useful free resources on the internet. He also outlined a suggested piece of research on GCE A

- levels in local schools which would consider: results; resources; training and funding issues. The SACRE agreed that this piece of research should go ahead.
- There was input from the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education about support that is being provided for schools during lockdown which has included two videos each week for collective worship and resources on humanism.
  - The representative for The Family Trust outlined what support is being provided for schools both for RE and collective worship.

## **8. Contribution of SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda**

- a) The SACRE has not produced any further guidance which would support the local authority's wider agenda.
- b) Individual SACRE members have supported individual schools and inter-faith activities locally.

## **9. Summary**

The Medway SACRE functions well and does as much as it can, given a limited budget, in providing advice, training and support to schools including local academies, in promoting effective RE and collective worship. The SACRE has good local links, for example, with Rochester Cathedral, the local Inter-Faith Network, the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education and with some local religious communities. The SACRE has a good national link with NASACRE. The SACRE is suitably supported by an RE consultant who is an RE subject specialist with experience in schools, higher education, a local authority and as an HMI with Ofsted.

## **10. Membership of SACRE, local authority officers who attend, clerk and professional advice.**

The Chair of the SACRE is a local councillor and the vice-chair is a member from Group B. The SACRE is supported by a clerk from the local authority and by an RE subject specialist consultant. The consultant is commissioned to provide around 15-20 days each year to support SACRE meetings, to write the newsletters and the annual report, to add information to the website and to provide advice and training to schools.

The SACRE usually meets three times each year and meetings are mostly held in schools or in rooms provided at different places of worship. The agenda, along with relevant attachments, are distributed to members before the meetings take place. At each meeting the RE consultant provides information about relevant local and national developments. The annual budget for the SACRE for 2020/2021 was approximately £15,000.00 which is similar to the sum allocated by the local authority in previous years.

## Appendix A

### **Edition 16 of the Medway Primary RE newsletters for November 2020**

There was information about:

- Teaching and learning about aspects of Christianity: the Christmas story with suggestions for establishing possible links between Bible stories about the birth of Jesus of Nazareth and pupils' lives.
- Free resources on the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) website.

### **Edition 16 of the Medway Secondary RE newsletters for November 2020**

There was information about:

- An article written by Philip Barnes formerly of King's College, London about the issue of truth claims in RE.
- Barnes' colleague (previously at Kings College, London) Andrew Wright's book *Critical Religious Education, multiculturalism and the pursuit of truth*, (2007, University of Wales Press, pages 220-224)) who offered 'five general criteria for adjudicating between worldviews: congruence, coherence, fertility, simplicity and depth.'
- A detailed review of *Critical Religious Education in Practice: A Teacher's Guide for the Secondary Classroom* (2019) by Christina Easton, Angela Goodman, Andrew Wright and Angela Wright.
- A brief review of the major report on RE: *Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward* (2018) Commission on Religious Education (CoRE).

### **Edition 17 of the Medway Primary RE newsletters for March 2021**

There was information about:

- Teach RE and the various modules available.
- Free resources on OpenLearn.
- Specific resources for different key stages resources on the NATRE website.

### **Edition 17 of the Medway Secondary RE newsletters for March 2021**

There was information about:

- Specific resources for key stages 3 and 4 on the NATRE website.
- Free resources on OpenLearn with details about specific courses.

## Appendix B

Figures for the attendance at SACRE meetings, by members of each of the four committees and others.

<b>Groups on SACRE</b>	<b>26 November 2020</b>	<b>18 March2021</b>
<b>Group A: Christian denominations and members of world faiths</b>		
Stephen Bello	Yes	Yes
Irina Fridman	Yes	Yes
Ayaz Iqbal	No	No
Kulwat Jhita Singh	Yes	Yes
Anil Patel	No	No
Faran Forghani	No	Yes
Dean Collins	Yes	Yes
<b>Group B: Church of England</b>		
Helen Bradshaw	Yes	Yes
Virginia Corbyn	Yes	Yes
Helen Burn	No	Yes
Anna Pattenden	Yes	Yes
<b>Group C: Teacher associations</b>		
Carolyn Burch	Yes	Yes
Lisa Humphries	Yes	Yes
Emily Calder-Evans	NA	Yes
<b>Group D: Local authority</b>		
Cllr Trevor Clarke	Yes	Yes
Cllr Elizabeth Turpin	Yes	Yes
Cllr Jo Howcroft-Scott	Yes	Yes
Cllr Gloria Opara	Yes	Yes
<b>Others</b>		
Ian Hartland	Yes	No
Ruth Wells (local authority clerk)	Yes	Yes