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Annual Report

Northumberland Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Academic Year 2015 – 2016

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The Chair's Introduction and Context

The work of Northumberland's SACRE has continued and 2015-16 proved to be another busy year. I am pleased to report that the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus, last revised in 2011, continues to be popular with all the schools using it, and that teachers have found it helpful to access it electronically via the SACRE webpage on the Northumberland County Council website. However, it was during this academic year that the SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference turned their attention to completing the revision of the Agreed Syllabus, which will be ready for schools to use from September 2016.

In some respects, our focus has remained the same: monitoring Ofsted reports, looking at the work of individual schools, considering the exam results at GCSE, AS Level and A Level, and reflecting on best practice in the County and elsewhere.

We continue to work in a rapidly changing educational environment. The increase in the number of academies and free schools, and the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), have had an impact in Northumberland as everywhere else. We share concerns over the future of RE in our secondary and high schools as the subject struggles to remain relevant outside the EBacc.

Northumberland continues to be hard hit in the very difficult financial climate faced by local authorities, more so since challenging financial settlements are nothing new to us.

Resources to support the work of the SACRE have diminished, but the commitment of all SACRE's members continues. We depend on the goodwill of a very small central team who have an impact way beyond their numbers. The same is true of those working in our schools, many of them facing their own considerable pressures.

These really are challenging times.

It is an absolute privilege to have served as Chair of the SACRE and to work with a group of dedicated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable members. Our meetings are enjoyable and constructive, and based on shared commitment to the continuation of the best possible provision of teaching and learning. We work in an atmosphere of mutual respect and celebrate what we can learn from each other in reflecting our increasingly diverse communities.

I want to thank all those who have helped us during the last year, and particular thanks go to my colleagues who make this task so worthwhile.

Robert Arckless,
Chairperson, Northumberland SACRE.

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Advice to Statutory Bodies

The SACRE advised the local authority that, in order for it to fulfil its responsibilities adequately, consideration should be given to (a) allocating an agreed budget for the financial year, and (b) ensuring that the part-time RE Consultant is given an appropriate number of days per annum to meet his various responsibilities. Regarding the budget, the SACRE received assurances that all necessary and reasonable costs will be met centrally. Regarding the part-time RE Consultant, it was agreed that he will be remunerated for a maximum of 20 days on SACRE-related matters on behalf of the local authority for the financial year ending 31st March 2016 (this was largely to ensure that the revision of the Agreed Syllabus would be completed for September 2016). Moreover, it was agreed that he would be retained for 21 days for the financial year beginning 1st April 2016.

The SACRE advised the local authority about schools where good or excellent work is undertaken in relation to RE and collective worship, and about schools where there is still room for improvement.

The SACRE also emphasised that the current OFSTED inspection framework makes it almost impossible to draw firm conclusions about the quality of RE, collective worship or Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development. For some years now, inspection of subject teaching has been much less of an issue (although the SACRE appreciates that "RE: realising the potential", published by OFSTED in 2013, has important and instructive things to say about how RE is taught nationally).

The SACRE made a few recommendations to the local authority about training that might be offered to teachers in the academic year 2015-16. However, the SACRE recognises that some of the most effective training now and in the future will be provided to staff in individual schools, or to RE teachers in specific partnerships working through continuing professional development (CPD) programmes which they shape themselves.

The chair, on behalf of the SACRE, wrote to the government to express concern about the continuing detrimental impact on secondary RE of RE being excluded from the Ebacc, and about cuts being made to the training of specialist RE teachers.

Standards and Quality of Provision of RE

The SACRE has monitored the quality of RE by various methods, including:

public exam results (in particular, those at GCSE and A Level);

feedback from individual SACRE members following visits to schools;

reports from the RE Consultant following visits to schools;

consultations with RE co-ordinators and heads of RE departments;

feedback from teachers attending training courses;

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examples of good or best practice described in the SACRE's termly Newsletter;

the albeit limited information deriving from OFSTED inspection reports (OFSTED inspection reports no longer offer comment on the standards of teaching and learning in RE).

From September 2012, OFSTED began using a new inspection framework, with the result that inspection reports assumed a character and an appearance markedly different to the period up to that point. Up to August 2012, every inspection report contained a table in which different aspects of a school's work were assigned a grade. One aspect of a school's work assigned a grade was SMSC Development. Because RE has not benefited from inspection in community schools for a number of years, the grade for SMSC Development was, in nine cases out of every ten, the only light that OFSTED inspection reports shone on RE, albeit indirectly (insofar as SMSC Development is a whole school issue, although the SACRE accepts that RE has a special and perhaps unique contribution to make to such development).

From September 2012, only four aspects of a school's work were assigned grades in an inspection report: outcomes for children and learners; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils; and effectiveness of leadership and management (to give them their present titles. A fifth aspect of a school's work was added later, early years provision, but this did not apply to all schools, of course). Consequently, SMSC Development is no longer assigned a grade. This means that, since September 2012, inspection reports do not readily provide insights into SMSC Development, let alone RE. It is true that SMSC Development often secures a comment or two in an inspection report, but inspection teams do not comment about it in every report. Moreover, as was discovered when an officer engaged in a trawl through some of the inspection reports for the period September 2014 to July 2015, the most that were found were comments such as "Students' SMSC is promoted well in lessons" or "SMSC is addressed superficially". In consequence, OFSTED inspection reports no longer provide the means to draw reliable conclusions about the quality of SMSC Development within a local authority. The monitoring role of the SACRE has therefore been made even more difficult than it was prior to September 2012.

The SACRE is aware of the following in relation to RE in the County's schools. As the children get older, more mature and more sophisticated in their outlook, and as greater emphasis is placed on learning from rather than learning about religion and belief, teachers in middle, secondary and high schools experiment with less didactic and more open-ended and exploratory teaching and learning methods, ones designed, above all, to create independent learners who can engage with the evidence in a dispassionate and rational manner.

However, some OFSTED inspection reports, and anecdotal evidence deriving from SACRE members and others, reveal that some of the most innovative teaching and learning methods exist in our first and primary schools where every effort is made to approach the study of religion and belief in a cross-curricular manner. Such cross-curricular approaches emphasise that, for large numbers of people, religion and belief impact on many, if not all,

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aspects of life.

RE GCSE Short Course

When this report was drafted (late December 2016), data suggested that, in Summer 2016, 276 Northumberland students sat the RE GCSE Short Course. If this is, indeed, the case, and the figure of zero entrants for the Short Course in 2015 is accurate (see below), the transformation is of considerable interest (although the number of entrants for 2016 is less than that for 2014, and considerably less than for every year from 2008 to 2013). The number of entrants for the RE GCSE Short Course declined nationally from about 87,000 in 2015 to just over 15,000 in 2016.

89.5% of entrants secured A*-G and 53.7% of entrants secured A*-C. These figures are similar to, but nonetheless worse than, those in 2014. Nationally, 58.9% of entrants secured A*-C and 93.7% of entrants secured A*-G. Performance within the LA as a whole is not as good as that nationally.

Just for the record, the outcomes for the RE GCSE Short Course from 2008 to 2015 are as follows:

2008: 1445 students, 94.5% (A*-G), 37.8% (A*-C)

2009: 1467 students, 94.5% and 30.6%

2010: 944 students, 92.4% and 26.7%

2011: 901 students, 91.3% and 36.6%

2012: 656 students, 80.0% and 25.9%

2013: 635 students, 88.1% and 32.2%

2014: 312 students, 93.8% and 63.9%

2015: Data supplied by County Hall in December 2015 suggested NO students had been entered for the RE GCSE Short Course.

Among Northumberland schools with a significant number of entrants for the Short Course (40 or more), notable results derived from:

The Duchess High (219 entrants), where 61.2% of entrants secured A*-C grades and 92.2% secured A*-G grades.

RE GCSE Full Course

When this report was drafted (late December 2016), data suggested that, in Summer 2016, 1367 students sat the RE GCSE Full Course. 96.4% secured A*-G grades and 61.8% secured A*-C grades. There has therefore been a slight decline in the number of entrants compared with 2015, but the figure is higher than for any year from 2008 to 2014 (see below). However, nationally there was a very small increase in the number of entrants for the RE GCSE Full Course.

The comparable figures for earlier years are as follows:

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2008: 788 students, 98.6% (A*-G) and 66.2% (A*-C)
2009: 470 students, 99.8% and 79.8%
2010: 532 students, 99.8% and 75.8%
2011: 565 students, 100% and 79.5%
2012: 872 students, 96.6% and 54.2%
2013: 794 students, 94.6% and 58.2%
2014: 863 students, 94.6% and 55%
2015: 1435 students, 96.6% and 62.7%

Results for A*-G grades in 2016 demonstrate a statistically insignificant downward trend on the outcomes for 2015, but remain lower than for the years 2008 to 2011. Results for A*-C grades in 2016 are notably higher than for the years 2012 to 2014, but significantly lower than for the years 2008 to 2011.

Nationally, 97.8% of students secured A*-G grades, which is a little better than the performance in Northumberland. Nationally, 71.5% of students secured A*-C grades, but only 61.8% of students secured the highest grades in Northumberland. Moreover, while the number of students securing the highest grades nationally has fluctuated only 2.2% over the last eight years, in Northumberland the fluctuation has exceeded 25% (compare 2009 with 2012). Taken long-term, Northumberland's results for A*-C grades indicate that performance needs to improve, despite the more encouraging outcomes in 2015 and 2016.

Among Northumberland schools with a significant number of entrants for the Full Course (40 or more), notable results derived from:

Ponteland Community High (170 entrants), where 80% of entrants secured A*-C grades, Prudhoe Community High (40 entrants), where 75% of entrants secured A*-C grades, and King Edward VI Academy (318 entrants) where 72.6% of entrants secured A*-C grades.

The unvalidated figure of 1643 for the total number of entrants for the RE GCSE Full AND Short courses means that in the County as a whole more students studied RE at GCSE in 2016 than for any year since 2010 (see below). However, the total number of entrants for an RE GCSE exam in 2016 is still far below the figures for 2008 and 2009, and this long-term downward trend may prove to be of greater significance than the encouraging news associated with 2015 and 2016.

2008: 2233 students
2009: 1937 students
2010: 1476 students
2011: 1466 students
2012: 1528 students
2013: 1429 students
2014: 1175 students
2015: 1435 students

We conclude that RE GCSE remains in an insufficiently healthy condition in many (but not all) Northumberland secondary and high schools.

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While the insufficiently healthy condition of RE GCSE in the County as a whole to some degree reinforces the notable achievements at Ponteland Community High and King Edward VI Academy, the following questions must be asked. Firstly, why has the popularity of RE GCSE declined since 2009? Secondly, what arrangements are made by the County's secondary and high schools to ensure that students NOT studying RE for an accredited GCSE course are benefitting from their statutory entitlement to an RE programme of study shaped by the content of the locally agreed RE syllabus?

RE AS Level

When this report was drafted (late December 2016), data suggested that, in Summer 2016, 150 students sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics AS Level. 88% secured A-E grades and 34% secured A-B grades.

The comparable figures for the four years before 2015 are as follows:

2012: 38 students, 97.5% (A-E) and 25% (A-B)
2013: 45 students, 83.7% and 14%
2014: 44 students, 68.2% and 13.6%
2015: 165 students, 80.6% and 29.1%

The data indicate a pronounced upward trend in terms of performance since 2013, but a decline in the number of entrants in relation to 2015. This said, the number of entrants for 2016 remains significantly higher than for 2012 to 2014. The number of students sitting the RS/Philosophy and Ethics AS Level is probably too small to allow for meaningful discussion about trends, but, just for the record, 45% of entrants secured A-B nationally. We appear to be underperforming in relation to the nation as a whole.

RE A Level

When this report was drafted (late December 2016), data suggested that, in Summer 2016, 88 students sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level. 98.9% secured A*-E grades and 43.2% secured A*-B grades. From 2008 to 2015, the number of students who sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level were 104, 107, 106, 101, 88, 70, 71 and 95. The number of students who sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level in 2016 was lower than for the best years but higher than for 2013 and 2014.

The comparable figures for the four years before 2016 are as follows:

2012: 88 students, 98.9% (A*-E) and 43.7% (A*-B)
2013: 70 students, 100% and 34.8%
2014: 71 students, 100% and 33.8%
2015: 95 students, 100% and 35.8%

The number of students sitting the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level is probably too small to allow for meaningful discussion about trends, but we nonetheless point out the following. The percentage of students securing A*-E grades varies little over the 2013 to 2016 period.

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Although the percentage of students securing the highest grades in 2016 has risen significantly in relation to all the years except 2012, results in the County still lag behind the national situation. Nationally, 54.4% of students who sat the RS/Philosophy and Ethics A Level in 2016 secured the top grades. Much therefore needs to be done to close the gap between the percentage of students securing the top grades at A Level in the County and the percentage of students securing the top grades at A Level nationally.

Some of the concerns expressed by the SACRE about the well-being of RE in our secondary and high schools for the last three to four years seem to be confirmed by these trends.

Training/Continuing Professional Development

RE teachers can access training about RE from at least four possible sources:

- contacting the Northumberland CPD College to arrange in-house RE training for an individual school, for a cluster of schools, or for RE co-ordinators/subject leaders in a partnership;
- contacting the part-time RE Consultant;
- contacting the North East Religious Resources Centre (NERRC);
- attending training events arranged by neighbouring local authorities offered to teachers, etc. beyond their boundaries.

During the academic year 2015-16, schools where training/in-depth consultations were undertaken included:

2 first schools

2 middle schools

2 high schools.

Issues addressed during school-based training/in-depth consultations included:

- The content of the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus;
- Revising RE long-term plans to better reflect the demands of the Agreed Syllabus;
- RE and Assessment for Learning;
- Ensuring feeder middle schools in a partnership teach the same topics to the same year groups;
- Good visitors and places to visit.

Discussions with the NERRC suggest that no Northumberland teachers attended any of the RE-related courses provided by the Centre.

Pupils and Students Withdrawn from RE and Complaints about RE

Parents can withdraw their children from RE and students aged over 18 can exercise the same right to withdraw from the subject. The SACRE is aware of only a small number of

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pupils and students who have been withdrawn from RE. Additionally, during the course of the year no formal complaint relating to RE was received by the local authority.

Agreed Syllabus

A revised Locally Agreed RE Syllabus was ready for use in schools from September 2011. Decisions about what would be revised were shaped, to a considerable degree, by the outcomes of a questionnaire circulated in 2008 to all schools using the previous Agreed Syllabus. However, the content of the "Non-Statutory National Framework for RE", "Transforming RE" and "Religious Education in English Schools: non-statutory guidance" helped determine the decision-making process. As a result, changes were not made to the units of work themselves (teachers believed that the existing units of work allowed for sufficient breadth, depth and flexibility, and therefore almost unanimously petitioned for their retention), but to the introductory and the guidance components which establish the broader context for RE in the contemporary era.

Needless to say, most of the very little continuing professional development (CPD) provided in the academic year 2015-16, and the great majority of school-based and electronic (email) consultations, were undertaken with a view to ensuring that schools and RE teachers were in a better position to successfully implement the Agreed Syllabus. However, schools and RE teachers were also advised by various means that a new Agreed Syllabus was in preparation and would be ready for use in schools from September 2016. The new Agreed Syllabus will be a major departure from what currently exists insofar as the statutory components will be shaped by the RE syllabus framework contained in the Religious Education Council's "RE Review" of 2013.

The current Locally Agreed RE Syllabus does not prescribe what teaching and learning methods teachers should use (although it does reflect on the variety of methods that teachers can utilise). Consequently, teachers select the methods they deem to be most appropriate, given the content addressed and the needs and the learning styles of the pupils and students concerned. Needless to say, as the children get older, more mature and more sophisticated in their outlook, and as greater emphasis is placed on learning from rather than learning about religion and belief, teachers in middle, secondary and high schools experiment with less didactic and more open-ended and exploratory teaching and learning methods, ones designed, above all, to create independent learners able to engage with the evidence in a dispassionate and rational manner.

The current Locally Agreed RE Syllabus does not prescribe what teaching and learning materials should be used, but the non-statutory guidance highlights a wealth of printed and electronic material which teachers may find useful. Moreover, the Agreed Syllabus contains advice about good resources that have come on stream in recent years. The SACRE termly Newsletter and RE CPD training sessions are used to update teachers about more recently produced teaching and learning materials.

Collective Worship

NCC's most recent "Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship" (ACWs) was

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formally launched in September 2006. It has not been updated because the advice it contains still complies with what is deemed by a majority within the RE community nationally to be best practice.

No formal complaint relating to collective worship was received by the local authority. Nor was the SACRE required to make a determination about the appropriateness, for either a school or a group of pupils or students in a school, of collective worship which is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

Taking the County as a whole, there are very few recorded instances of pupils or students withdrawn from ACWs. We take this as confirmation that most schools are therefore providing ACWs which achieve inclusivity by, among other things, taking full account of the rich diversity of religion and belief that presently exists in Northumberland. In other words, ACWs are provided in ways that are in sympathy with the needs and aspirations of the whole school community.

SACRE members and officers associated with the local authority have witnessed or taken part in ACWs that comply with the statutory requirements and/or the guidance in the local authority's "Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship".

Management of the SACRE

Staff

The local authority has a School Improvement Partner (The Commissioner for Secondary Education) with ultimate responsibility for RE and collective worship, but such responsibility is merely one among many. Consequently, the local authority employs part-time (a maximum of 20 days for 2015-16) a consultant to assist with matters relating to RE and collective worship. Democratic Services provides the SACRE with a clerk who not only minutes the meetings and fields correspondence, but also engages in a host of tasks designed to ensure that the SACRE can conduct its business in an enviably efficient and cost effective manner.

Finance

Regarding a budget, the SACRE has received assurances from the local authority that all necessary and reasonable costs will be met centrally.

SACRE meetings, etc.

The SACRE met on three occasions in the academic year 2015-16, on 15th October 2015, 15th January 2016 and 25th May 2016. On each occasion the SACRE was quorate with at least two members in each committee present. A majority of SACRE members, including the North-East Humanists' co-opted representative, were able to attend all or at least two SACRE meetings, thereby ensuring continuity and progression from one meeting to the next. To sustain links with the academies, the Head of Philosophy, Theology and Ethics at Bede Academy, Blyth, had observer status.

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We have commented elsewhere on matters to do with complaints and determinations as they relate to RE and collective worship. SACRE meetings were dominated by two issues: topical matters drawn to our attention by, among others, the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE), and revision of the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus so it will be ready for schools to use from September 2016. Throughout the year, an ASC working group laboured tirelessly to generate text for the new syllabus.

Contribution of the SACRE to the wider Local Authority agenda

The SACRE contributes to the wider local authority agenda by:
giving expression to equality, diversity, inclusion and community cohesion. It thereby makes a contribution to the local authority's public sector equality duty (e.g. note the membership of the SACRE; the chair, who is a gay man with a disability who has been an equality champion in Northumberland for many years; the inclusive nature of the Agreed Syllabus and the "Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship"; articles published in the termly SACRE Newsletter)

helping to raise standards in schools (e.g. note the content of the Agreed Syllabus; the termly SACRE Newsletter which highlights best practice; the support that individuals associated with the SACRE provide to schools; the annual monitoring of public exam results)

contributing to the annual HMD commemoration, an event for which it has "campaigned" for some years

providing the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for teachers to provide high quality RE (e.g. note the provision of training; consultations via email about specific matters raised by teachers/schools concerning RE and/or ACWs; the termly SACRE Newsletter which highlights best practice)

avoiding unnecessary and/or unreasonable costs at a time of considerable financial difficulty/austerity (e.g. note the arrangements for meeting costs agreed with the local authority; the relatively few days each year that the part-time RE Consultant works on behalf of the SACRE; the willingness of SACRE members to volunteer when tasks need completing on behalf of the SACRE – such as the revision of the Agreed Syllabus during 2015-16).

Links with Other Agencies

National:

Membership of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).

Local/Regional:

Close working relations exist with the NERRC

Close working relations exist with the region's Free Church denominations and other

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religious and faith communities, some of which are represented on the SACRE (e.g. the Hindu/ISKCON, Jewish and Sikh communities)

Close working relations exist with the Anglican and the Roman Catholic dioceses, which are represented on the SACRE

Close working relations exist with the North-East Humanists, who are represented on the SACRE

Individual SACRE members sit on other SACREs in the region, or are asked to attend other SACREs' meetings to contribute to discussions and debates.

Summary of Other Relevant Information

The SACRE continues to publish a termly A4 Newsletter which varies in length from 4 to 8 pages. The Newsletter keeps teachers, governors and others informed about the latest developments relating to RE and ACWs; highlights best practice within the County; notifies about training options; provides early warning about important festivals and national and international events that schools may wish to discuss during RE lessons or ACWs; and alerts teachers about the most up-to-date RE resources. We are pleased to note that a few other SACREs in the region (e.g. Darlington, North Tyneside, Gateshead) have found it beneficial, either in the past or the present, to experiment with similar exercises designed to promote best practice.

Every 3 to 4 weeks during term time, the RE Consultant sends approximately 60 colleagues across the County an email containing useful information about RE, ACWs, community cohesion and a host of equality and diversity matters.

During the academic year 2015-16, the SACRE continued to work its way through its action plan (which was up-dated in January 2016) to ensure its work has structure and coherence (the action plan can be found in Appendix Two). Three or four years ago, the NASACRE singled out the last action plan as one worthy of emulation. The current action plan covers the period until December 2018.

The SACRE has a designated webpage (accessible via the Northumberland County Council website) where schools, teachers and governors can access the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus, the "Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship", copies of all the SACRE newsletters and other relevant documentation.

Twice, discussions took place to consider how best to revitalise the SACRE membership to replace representatives who resigned for reasons associated with retirement or career progression.

Schools were encouraged to consider applying for the highly worthwhile Accord Award for Inclusive Schools, and attention was also drawn to the RE Quality Mark and the Farmington Fellowships for headteachers and teachers of RE/RS. Moreover, one of the SACRE's most comprehensive discussions revolved around the issue of what relationship the SACRE should sustain with the growing number of academies and free schools.

Members of the SACRE played a key role in the County's second Holocaust Memorial Day

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(HMD) commemoration in January 2016. The two commemorations that have taken place have been such a success that the will exists to ensure that an HMD commemoration is now held annually.

The SACRE is much heartened to find how many Northumberland schools organise visits for pupils and students to houses of worship and other facilities reflecting the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Britain, even though, in a County as large as ours, such visits often involve considerable expense and long-distance travel. The success of many such visits is shared with a larger audience via the SACRE's termly Newsletter. It is also via the termly Newsletter that the SACRE most obviously confirms its commitments to equality, diversity, inclusion, community cohesion and promoting the fundamental British values.

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Appendix One:

Membership of the SACRE, plus the LA officers who attend, clerk and provide professional advice

The SACRE Members, 2015 - 2016

(a) Representatives of Other Churches and Faiths

Baptist Church	Represented by the United Reformed Church
Methodist Church	Mr. D. Fenwick
Roman Catholic Church	J. Cousin
United Reformed Church	Reverend E. H. Marley OBE
Hinduism	Bhakti Rasa Adhikhara
Judaism	Mrs. D. Van Der Velde
Sikhism	Harpal Singh and Cloud Singh

(b) Representatives of the Church of England

Mrs. E. Bainbridge
Mr. C. Hudson
Mr. P. Rusby
Rev. J. Scott

(c) Representatives of the Teachers' Associations

Mrs. L. Atkinson
Mr. A. Duffield
Miss F. Gannon
Mr. T. Nicholls
Mrs. H. Shaw

(d) Representatives of the Local Authority

Councillor Mr. G. R. Arckless MBE (Chair)
Councillor Mr. A. H. Murray MBE
Councillor Mr. B. Pidcock MBE
Councillor Mr. J. E. Smith

(e) Co-Opted Member

Mrs. C. Butterworth North-East Humanists

(f) Observer (Academies' Rep)

Mr. M. Thompson, Head of Philosophy, Theology and Ethics, Bede Academy

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(g) LA Officers in Attendance

D. Cookson	Commissioner for Secondary Education
D. Jackson	Commissioner for Curriculum and Learning
P. André	Part-time RE Consultant
L. Papaioannou	Clerk to the SACRE, Democratic Services

Terms of Reference

Terms of reference as per Circular 3/89, Circular 1/94 and legislation such as the 1988 Education Reform Act and the 1996 Education Act:

"To advise the Authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in County schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the Authority may refer to the Council or as the Council may see fit."

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Appendix Two:

The SACRE's Action Plan

Northumberland SACRE Action Plan January 2016 - December 2018

Key Element: Monitoring standards, quality and provision of RE.

Rationale: To monitor, support and evaluate the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus.

Objective	Action	Responsibility and date to be achieved	Cost	Success criteria/ outcomes	Date achieved
To disseminate information about the new RE Agreed Syllabus and to plan and organise a launch for the syllabus	Agree the format for the launch and firm up arrangements associated with it (date and time, venue, speakers/workshop leaders, refreshments, handouts, etc.) Agree how the syllabus will be presented in electronic format, and agree how best to navigate the syllabus electronically	SACRE, the SACRE sub-group, LA officers. May/June 2016	We do not know what a realistic cost for an event of this nature would be. Obviously, if supply cover must be provided for teachers, the cost will escalate significantly	The launch is well attended and secures some wider exposure, perhaps in the media The syllabus is easily accessible via the SACRE webpage on the NCC website, and teachers and others can navigate the syllabus quickly and with ease	
To support school staff as they implement the Agreed Syllabus	Provide, or help to organise, support (e.g. consultations) for all staff in a school, or for RE subject leaders/ specialists in one or more schools	SACRE, LA officers. September 2016, but ongoing	Officers' time, which converts into money	All schools develop schemes of work which meet with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus	
To produce a three-year CPD (continuing professional development)	SACRE recommends a suitable CPD programme, after which suitable providers of the	SACRE, LA officers. October 2016	Money will be required for this, unless funding can be secured from another source (e.g. we	CPD and other support for RE subject leaders/ specialists results in	

<p>programme for the County's RE teachers, RE subject leaders, governors and other interested parties (e.g. school chaplains)</p>	<p>programme can be identified</p> <p>The CPD programme is advertised via the LA's pre-existing means of communication and the termly SACRE Newsletter</p>		<p>have a successful Westhill/ NASACRE award bid)</p>	<p>increased teacher confidence and improved practice</p> <p>The quality of RE improves in all key stages</p> <p>Pupils and students enjoy RE even more than at present</p> <p>Schools consider applying for the RE Quality Mark</p> <p>Pupils and students engage more effectively in peer- and self-assessment</p> <p>ICT (information and communication technology) is used appropriately and effectively as a learning tool</p>	
<p>To ensure the LA provides RE teachers, RE subject leaders, governors and other interested parties with CPD about British values and challenging extremism and radicalisation</p>	<p>Letters are written by the Chair of the SACRE to appropriate LA officers to ensure such CPD is provided, and to establish by whom it is provided</p>	<p>Chair of the SACRE. September 2016</p>		<p>A relevant CPD programme is provided</p> <p>RE teachers, RE subject leaders and governors with interests in RE/SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development attend such training and such training impacts positively on practice in school</p>	

<p>To monitor implementation and delivery of the Agreed Syllabus</p>	<p>Schools, anonymously if they so wish, are encouraged to submit examples of schemes of work to the SACRE</p> <p>LA officers report to the SACRE about delivery of the Agreed Syllabus observed during visits to schools</p> <p>The Head of Children's Services is requested to draft a letter to all headteachers/principals and chairs of governing bodies seeking assurances that all the schools that must or do use the Agreed Syllabus are using the new one, and that the new syllabus is fully implemented no later than September 2017</p>	<p>LA officers. Ongoing</p>	<p>Officers' time, which converts into money</p>	<p>The amount of time allocated to RE conforms with the advice in the Agreed Syllabus</p> <p>Evidence exists that schools are meeting their statutory duties in relation to the Agreed Syllabus</p> <p>SACRE is better informed about what is being taught during RE lessons</p>
<p>To monitor results in RE/RS/philosophy and ethics exam courses</p>	<p>Examine RE/RS/philosophy and ethics exam results annually for short course GCSE, long course GCSE and post-16 courses, and</p>	<p>LA officers. Annually, ideally Autumn term</p>	<p>Officers' time, which converts into money</p>	<p>A report is submitted to the SACRE with accurate data, ideally in Autumn term, for exam results in the Summer before</p>

	compare such results with past results in the County, and past and contemporary results nationally			SACRE has an accurate picture of the provision of RE/RS/philosophy and ethics exam courses and the success achieved by students in the County	
To monitor the number of pupils and students withdrawn from RE	Examine annually the number of pupils and students withdrawn from RE Consider why the number is high or low If appropriate, offer advice to schools about how they can reduce the number of pupils and students withdrawn from RE	LA officers, SACRE. Annually, ideally Summer term	Officers' time, which converts into money	A report is submitted to the SACRE with accurate data, ideally in Summer term Appropriate actions result from the report, perhaps including the provision of advice to schools about how to reduce the number of pupils or students withdrawn from RE	

Key Element: Monitoring the provision and quality of Collective Worship.

Rationale: To audit Collective Worship provision and ensure good use is made of the 2006 NCC Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines.

Objective	Action	Responsibility and date to be achieved	Cost	Success criteria/ outcomes	Date achieved
To monitor provision of Collective Worship in	Letter to all schools seeking confirmation	Chair of the SACRE/LA officers.	Officers' time, which converts into money	The SACRE has an accurate picture of Collective	

<p>relation to the 2006 NCC Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines</p>	<p>that Collective Worship follows the advice in the 2006 policy and guidelines</p>	<p>Annually, ideally in Spring term</p>		<p>Worship provision throughout the County</p>	
<p>To encourage schools to share with each other (e.g. via the termly SACRE Newsletter) of collective worship) complying with the 2006 Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines</p>	<p>Letter to all schools with appropriate information</p>	<p>Chair of the SACRE/ LA officers. January 2017, but ongoing</p>		<p>A number of model ACWs exist which can be disseminated among schools</p> <p>Collective Worship is inspirational, of a consistently high standard and addresses diverse teaching and learning styles</p> <p>Opportunities for pupil and student participation in preparing and presenting Collective Worship are increased</p> <p>Collective Worship is inclusive for all pupils and students whether they are Christian, followers of other faiths or have no faith at all</p>	
<p>To monitor the number of pupils and students withdrawn from</p>	<p>Examine annually the number of pupils and students withdrawn</p>	<p>LA officers, SACRE. Annually, ideally Summer term</p>	<p>Officers' time, which converts into money</p>	<p>A report is submitted to the SACRE with accurate data, ideally in Summer term</p>	

<p>Collective Worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, and to confirm that suitable alternative provision is made for such pupils and students</p>	<p>from such Collective Worship, and critically evaluate what alternative provision is made for such pupils and students</p> <p>Consider why the number of pupils and students withdrawn from such collective worship is high or low</p> <p>If appropriate, offer advice to schools about how they can reduce the number of pupils and students withdrawn from such Collective Worship</p>			<p>Appropriate actions result from the report, perhaps including the provision of advice to schools about how to reduce the number of pupils or students withdrawn from Collective Worship</p>	
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Key Element: The development of SACRE's role and work.

Rationale: To raise awareness of SACRE's role and responsibilities among schools and the local community.

Objective	Action	Responsibility and date to be achieved	Cost	Success criteria/outcomes	Date achieved
<p>To comply with the SACRE's statutory responsibilities, on behalf of the LA</p>	<p>Produce a 3-year SACRE action plan</p>	<p>The SACRE sub-group, SACRE. January 2016</p>		<p>Raised awareness of the SACRE's role and responsibilities among SACRE members and the local authority as a whole</p>	

<p>To continue producing a termly SACRE Newsletter for schools, which will include information about new RE resources and best practice in the County</p>	<p>Copy and photographs to be sent in the first instance to LP and PA, who will edit/proof-read/compose, etc. copy for the Newsletter and agree the best photos for inclusion</p> <p>LP to liaise with in-house or external suppliers to publish the Newsletter</p> <p>The Newsletter, in hard and electronic forms, to be circulated to all the usual recipients</p>	<p>SACRE, LA officers. Copy TBA at least four weeks in advance of publication (publication is always early every term)</p>	<p>Assurances have been given that all reasonable costs will be met centrally for the production of the Newsletter</p>	<p>Awareness of the SACRE's role and responsibilities raised among teachers and governors</p> <p>Teachers contribute examples of good practice to disseminate via the Newsletter</p> <p>Good practice re. RE and Collective Worship is replicated in readers' schools</p> <p>The amount of copy produced by the editorial team is reduced as others, including teachers, contribute by writing articles</p>	
<p>To produce an annual report about the work of the SACRE for the DfE (Department for Education), etc.</p>	<p>The Chair and LA officers to collate information and write the report for the DfE, etc.</p>	<p>SACRE, LA officers. December annually</p>	<p>Officers' time, which converts into money</p>	<p>A statutory duty is met and good work carried out by the SACRE, NCC and the County's schools affirmed</p>	
<p>To broaden the membership of the SACRE, thereby ensuring, a) all four voting committees have</p>	<p>The Church of England, other faith communities, Teachers' Associations and the LA to be approached for</p>	<p>SACRE, LA officers. Ongoing</p>		<p>The SACRE embraces a rich variety of religions and beliefs, and accesses the viewpoints of a wide range of stakeholders, all of whom</p>	

<p>sufficient representatives for SACRE to be quorate, and, b) other stakeholders are represented through co-option or as observers</p>	<p>representation, as appropriate. Other stakeholders to be approached for representation, as appropriate</p>			<p>seek to improve RE and Collective Worship in the County</p> <p>The SACRE enhances its knowledge, understanding and skills re. RE and Collective Worship</p> <p>The SACRE is informed about concerns, priorities, developments, etc. nationally as they relate to RE and Collective Worship</p>	
<p>To send a delegate to NASACRE's Annual Conference</p>	<p>A representative of/officer associated with the SACRE volunteers to attend the Conference and to report to the SACRE about the main outcomes</p>	<p>May, annually</p>	<p>Conference fee, return rail fare to venue, possible overnight accommodation. Officer's time, if an officer attends</p>	<p>The SACRE is informed about concerns, priorities, etc. of SACREs nationally, and about the latest developments in relation to RE and Collective Worship</p>	
<p>To arrange every second SACRE meeting in a school or academy rather than County Hall, thereby raising the profile of the SACRE</p>	<p>LA officers ask schools or academies if they would like to host a SACRE meeting</p>	<p>LA officers. April/May 2016 for the first such visit, ongoing thereafter for every second meeting</p>		<p>The SACRE acquires first-hand insight into RE and/or Collective Worship in specific schools or academies, and the SACRE's profile is raised outside County Hall</p>	
<p>To organise a whole day training event for the SACRE which includes visits to three houses of</p>	<p>The programme TBA by the SACRE itself during a termly SACRE meeting</p>	<p>SACRE, LA officers. Summer term, 2017 or 2018</p>	<p>There will be costs (e.g. donations to the houses of worship that host us, possible</p>	<p>The SACRE acquires a better first-hand understanding of the diversity in religion and</p>	

<p>worship in Northumberland and concludes with a briefing about Humanism</p>			<p>transport costs, lunch, etc.), but with some imagination the day can be made very cost effective. Picnic, anyone?</p>	<p>belief on its doorstep and an insight into the sort of places that Northumberland schools take their pupils and students on trips</p> <p>Following the November 2015 high court decision about teaching secular worldviews such as Humanism and publication of "RE for Real", SACRE members secure a firmer understanding about Humanist beliefs and practices</p> <p>The SACRE engages in an activity that enhances interpersonal/ inter-communal relations (and members have a good time)</p>	
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Appendix Three:

Distribution List

All Schools in Northumberland
Director of Education and Skills/Head of Children's Services, Northumberland
County Council
Department for Education
University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
County Library Service, Northumberland County Council
Northumberland's four MPs
All Northumberland County Councillors
The CE and RC Diocesan Authorities
Karenza Passmore, North-East Religious Resources Centre
Rev. Liz Mullen, United Reformed Church Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle-
Upon-Tyne, NE1 8JJ
Rev. Stephen Lindridge, Chairman of District, Methodist Church
Mr. D. Lennox, Secretary of the Baptist Union, North East Region Interfaith Group in
Newcastle
North-East Humanist Association
Harnham Buddhist Monastery, 2 Harnham Hall Cottages, Belsay, Northumberland,
NE20 0HF
The Board of Deputies of British Jews
The United Hebrew Congregation, Newcastle
The Newcastle Reform Synagogue
Muslim Council of Britain, PO Box 57330, London, E1 2WJ
Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations UK, 43 Dorset Road, Merton Park, London,
SW193EZ
NASACRE_