



Harrow SACRE Meeting

Thursday 24th October 2013 at 7.30p.m.

To be held in Committee Rooms 1 & 2
Harrow Civic Centre

Enquiries & apologies to:
Vivian Wright, Clerk to SACRE
vmwright@waitrose.com

or
Rachel Bowerman, SSIA, HSIP Lead Officer to SACRE
020 8736 6516

HARROW STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

AGENDA

1. **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**
2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JUNE 2013** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Business items: Improving standards in religious education and collective worship

5. **ANNUAL REPORT**
To agree the draft SACRE Annual Report (Pages 9 - 15)
6. **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE: REVIEWING SACRE GUIDANCE**
Headteachers have welcomed SACRE's Guidance on absence for religious observance which was launched in 2012 – 2013. Representatives on Group A are asked to identify and agree within their faith communities those dates 'set apart' for religious observance in 2013 - 2014. The SACRE should review and agree the statement of guidance for re-publication. (Pages 16 – 20).

Information items: improving SACRE's effectiveness

7. **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: REALISING THE POTENTIAL**
This Ofsted subject survey report is based on evidence drawn from 185 schools visited between Sept 2009 and July 2012. The report judges that the potential of RE is not being realised fully in the majority of the schools surveyed and that not enough has been done to address the key recommendations identified in the previous Ofsted survey report (Transforming Religious Education, 2010). Report summary pages (21 – 23)
8. **RE COUNCIL REVIEW REPORT**
In summer 2012 the RE Council initiated a review of religious education in England, to run in parallel to the government's review of the National Curriculum. After a year of consultation, the final report of the RE Review will be published on 23rd October 2013. The Report contains a non-statutory RE curriculum framework for syllabus makers. The Chair and Lead Officer will endeavour to present SACRE with headlines from the Report at the SACRE meeting the day after its publication. (Page 24)
9. **DATES OF FUTURE SACRE MEETINGS**
Autumn term 2013: 2nd December 2013 - Committee Rooms 1 & 2

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 12th JUNE 2013

Attendance:

Group A: (Religious traditions and Christian Churches)

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| * Mr Zia Baig (<i>until 9.10pm</i>) | * Mr Neville Ransley |
| ~Ms Mercedes Afnan | A Ms Angela Clapham |
| * Mr Mike Bishop | ~ Mrs Gill Ross |
| A Dr Julie Crow | * Mrs Doreen Samuels |
| * Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal | ~ Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli |
| * Mr Vijay Hirani | A Ven Sumana Sramaner |
| * Ms Varsha Dodhia | + Mr Zafar Khalid |
| * Councillor Asad Omar (<i>until 9.10pm</i>) | * Ananda Caitanya Das |
| * Ms Beverley Wilson | |

Group B: (Church of England)

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| * Mrs Mary Abbott | * Rev'd Philip Barnes |
| | * Rev'd Matthew Stone |

Group C: (Teachers' Associations)

- ~ Mrs Manju Radia
* Mrs Alison Stowe (Chair)

Group D: (Local Authority)

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Councillors: | A Camilla Bath |
| ~ Nana Asante | * Manji Kara (Reserving for Camilla Bath) |
| * James Bond | * Sasikala Suresh |

Officer

- *Rachel Bowerman (Senior School Improvement Professional & Adviser to SACRE, nominated by the Director of Education)

Visitors

- *Dr Godfred Donkor, incoming Head of Religious Studies, Rooks Heath College
*Mrs Rankin, outgoing Head of Religious Studies, Rooks Heath College
*Students of Rooks Heath College, Lana Bader, Muna Rashid, Negina Maihanwal and Milan Divecha

Clerk

- *Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

- * *denotes presence*
A *denotes absence with apologies*
~ *denotes absence without apologies*

Order of the Agenda:

Agreed to take item 6 as the first agenda item after the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair, so that the visitors could leave after their presentation.

Clerks' note: for the minutes I have followed the original order of the agenda.

1. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Chair: Doreen Samuels seconded by Mike Bishop proposed Alison Stowe

Elected unanimously

Vice-Chair: deferred. Rachel Bowerman would ask Camilla Bath if she is willing to stand again. Varsha Dodhia indicated her willingness to stand if Camilla Bath is not.

- 2. Welcome and introductions:** the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Dr Godfred Donkor, Mrs Rankin and students from Rooks Heath School, new member Cllr James Bond, representing the Independent Party and Manji Kara, reserving for Camilla Bath. Members of the committee introduced themselves.

3. Apologies for absence:

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Cllr Camilla Bath, Julie Crow, Angela Clapham, Ven Sumana Sramanar and Zafar Khalid.
The meeting was quorate.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Ms Mercedes Afnan, Mrs Gill Ross and Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli

Group C: Mrs Manju Radia.

Group D: Cllr Nana Asante

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2013 (pages 1-8)

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

p.1. Attendance list and p.7. minute 12b: Mrs Gan-Kotwal wished to point out that she was not present at the meeting because she had not been informed of the date. Rachel Bowerman apologized; she knew that Mrs Gan-Kotwal had telephoned the Teacher's Centre and had therefore assumed that she had received information about the meeting. For this meeting, Mrs Gan-Kotwal had received the papers in the post and she wished to thank those responsible.

p.6. Minute 9: review of Harrow Agreed Syllabus: as agreed at the last meeting, Rachel Bowerman and the Chair of SACRE wrote to Catherine Doran advising her that the LA is required to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference. The letter recommended that there are two national, on-going curriculum reviews which should be taken into account before the ASC commences its work. Rachel Bowerman tabled a copy of this letter and Catherine Doran's reply on behalf of Harrow Council. Harrow Council is in agreement with SACRE's recommendations and has set aside appropriate funds in order to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference and, if the ASC should decide it is necessary to do so, to develop a new agreed syllabus.

There were no further matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Business Items: Improving standards in RE and collective worship

6. SACRE Monitoring the Quality of RE: a School Self-evaluation Report

A Presentation by Dr Godfred Donkor, incoming Head of Religious Studies, Rooks Heath College and a group of Y10 students

Dr Donkor gave a summary of provision for RE at Rooks Heath:

- a) Timetable allocations – the equivalent of an hour a week for RS throughout KS 3 and KS 4. At KS 4 it is timetabled in fortnightly 2 hour blocks.
- b) The KS 3 curriculum covers, over the three years, each of the 6 principal world religions, from a particular thematic focus, for example, Judaism: Why Festivals? and Sikhism: identity and belonging. Each unit runs for a term. This KS 3 curriculum is designed to meet the

- c) At KS4 all students in Y10 and Y11 follow the Edexcel RS GCSE Short Course: Religion and Life, studying Christianity and one other religion.
- d) On entry in Y7 the majority of students are working at L4 in RE. They reach L5 by the end of KS 3. This trajectory is broadly in line with national expectations.
- e) The 2012 GCSE results broadly reflected pupils' predicted grades and 33 students exceeded expectations by two or more grades.
- f) The quality of teaching in the RE department is judged to be good and this evaluation is based upon lesson observations by the Senior Leadership Team and Ofsted.

Dr Donkor concluded his report on RE at Rooks Heath College by outlining some of the strengths of RE. He emphasised that neither the conversion to Academy status nor the introduction of the EBacc has made any difference to the profile of RE or the status of the RE department. RE continues to make a rich contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as was reported by Ofsted. It is a subject in which pupils new to the school or to the country, and for whom English is an additional language, make good progress because the vast majority feel that their religious identity is valued and that they can contribute to the learning as well as engage with it.

Four students then added their views.

- Milan Dinecha spoke of how RE covers issues of importance to young people. Students have opportunity at KS 3 to raise questions. At KS 4, in order to fully cover the exam syllabus, there is less opportunity for discussion and interactive work. Pupils value the weekly RS clubs which aid revision.
- Muna Rashid spoke about how RE develops interest in other cultures. She felt that RE is vital and noted that, although Harrow is one of the most religiously diverse boroughs, there is less conflict than elsewhere and this might be due both to adherence to religious values and also perhaps to the way in which RE promotes tolerance and respect. She reminded members that RE educates all pupils, both those from religious backgrounds and those from non-faith backgrounds.
- Negin Maihanwal felt that the study of RE is essential in our constantly changing and cosmopolitan society, it prepares pupils for adult life.
- Lana Bader talked about the status of RE. Currently students follow a short course GCSE which is not recognised in either the EBacc or other measures of standards at the end of KS 4. RE does not open doors to many careers and so some people regard it as a less useful and less academic subject. However it holds a relatively high status at Rooks Heath and she suggested some ideas for enhancing its profile.

Unfortunately, the visitors were unable to access the school website where their PowerPoint slides were saved. These have been circulated separately.

The students had two questions for SACRE members:

- Question 1: do members feel that some minority faiths are neglected in the curriculum?

Varsha Dodhia, Jain representative answered that Jainism, though a small religion, has a considerable membership in Harrow. She felt that having places of worship for different religions in the borough provided an important focal point. This was reinforced by Beverley Wilson who agreed that the Rastafarian community in Harrow aims to have its own place of worship. Doreen Samuels, Jewish representative, felt that this was an intriguing question: it indicated that the study of RE stimulates the spirit of enquiry and would prompt students to investigate other religions.

Phiroza Gan-Kotwal, Zoroastrian representative, indicated that although Zoroastrianism is a very small faith, she found primary school children extraordinarily well-informed about it.

Mrs Rankin added that the Harrow Agreed Syllabus requires a breadth of study at KS 2 that includes the Baha'i, Rastafarianism and Zoroastrianism.

Mike Bishop observed that because of the concentration on the larger faiths in the secondary syllabus, it is difficult to find good resources for the smaller faiths.

- Question 2: would it be a good idea to have a help line to offer advice to teenagers on religious beliefs?
Doreen Samuels sounded a note of caution, indicating the importance of distinguishing between advice and indoctrination.
Vijay Hirani felt it was important that students should learn how different faiths approach their deep probing questions.

Rachel Bowerman concluded this part of the discussion by pointing out that whatever happened elsewhere, smaller faiths are well-represented and have an equal voice on SACRE.

The visitors then invited questions from the panel.

Questions were asked about the constraints of timetabling allocations and the limitations of only offering the short course. Dr Donkor replied that the full course is a more attractive option for students and there is pressure from some students to offer a full course. On the other hand, the short course is very inclusive and accessible to students of lower ability. Whilst the short course remained the core entitlement offer, he would like to be able to offer additional modules so that pupils could 'top up' to make a full RS GCSE.

Varsha Dodhia asked about offering RE as an "A" level. Dr Donkor replied that Rooks Heath would like to promote "A" level RE but numbers are too few at present and there are not sufficient resources.

Rachel Bowerman asked if students regarded RE as challenging an academic subject as others. Lana Bader felt that it was not hard because pupils were usually well informed about their own religious traditions and beliefs.

Rachel Bowerman asked if RE promoted other forms of intellectual development apart from providing key facts about other religions. Milan Dinecha replied that a benefit of studying RE was the development of debating skills. As an atheist, he engages in debate with lots of students who hold different beliefs from his own. Negina Maihanwal added that much of the news concerns religion and culture and the study of RE improves knowledge of topical issues and encourages social cohesion.

Phiroza Gan-Kotwal asked if it would be possible for members of SACRE to see an RE examination paper. Rachel Bowerman undertook to supply this.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

Rachel Bowerman shared with members verbatim a question raised in an email by the Humanist representative. She asked for students' views and comments on the phrase "militant atheism," which Alan Brine had used in a presentation to NASACRE. Julie Crowe, who was not present this evening, had objected to the use of this phrase and asserted that atheists do not proselytize. The students were divided on this question. Two of the students, Negina Maihanwal and Milan Dinecha, who are themselves atheists, felt that there definitely was such a thing as "militant atheism" - although some atheists are very open to scientific discussion, others are only interested in converting others to their point of view while at the same time criticizing religious people who try to do this. No one should insist that one religion or point of view is correct or try to force their beliefs on others. Muna Rashid disagreed that atheists were militant and Lana Bader felt that being militant about either religion or atheism depends on people's background and upbringing.

On behalf of the SACRE committee, Rachel Bowerman thanked the students and their teachers for the quality of their presentation and the thoughtfulness and level of challenge apparent in both their questions and answers. Dr Donkor and Mrs Rankin expressed their pride in their students. Negina Maihanwal, on behalf of the visitors, thanked SACRE for inviting them to the meeting which they felt it had been an honour to attend. Mathew Stone also thanked their parents for allowing them to come and picking them up. The visitors then left the meeting.

Members felt that this was a very useful presentation. The students were very eloquent and engaged.

Rachel asked if there was anything else that members would like to see included in future presentations.

Mathew Stone suggested a very brief introduction on the school's context.

Doreen Samuels suggested that the constraints around offering "A" level RE at Rooks Heath should be followed up by SACRE. After discussion about the best way to provide this advice and challenge, in the context of an academy that does not fall within the remit of SACRE, it was decided that: Rachel would write a letter to Dr John Reavley congratulating him on the high standard of the presentation by his pupils and then asking about provision for RE post-16. It was also agreed that Rachel Bowerman should:

- request an opportunity to attend a meeting of the academy headteachers in order to discuss academy representation on SACRE
- speak with headteachers in each sector to urge that, when schools make presentations to SACRE, headteachers or senior leaders attend so that they can answer questions at a strategic level.

Rachel Bowerman will follow up these suggestions and Neville Ransley agreed to accompany her when she meets with the secondary heads.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

7. Raising the profile of Harrow SACRE (pages 9-10)

The accompanying papers for the meeting contained a short report by Rachel Bowerman printed in the latest Governors' Bulletin. The committee had also received copies of the slides that accompanied her presentation at the summer term meeting of Harrow Head Teachers with the Corporate Director of Children and Families, Catherine Doran. Rachel had used this presentation to: highlight SACRE's recent guidance publications, alerted headteachers to the forthcoming review of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus and, particularly, to remind them of SACRE's duty to monitor RE.

Rachel Bowerman stressed that SACRE does not have a mechanism for carrying out its monitoring role; although SACRE meetings now feature regular presentations from schools, SACRE still only hears from a very small sample and because schools are not using a common format for their reports, the evidence base, on which to evaluate RE in Harrow, is not robust. Rachel Bowerman has requested a meeting specifically with the Primary Headteachers at which she would like to be able to suggest a rolling programme of school reports over a 3 year cycle, so that SACRE can obtain regular and consistent reports.

Doreen Samuels reminded the committee that Rachel Bowerman had been instrumental in drafting the RE self-evaluation form for schools. However, as Rachel Bowerman pointed out, only one RE leader, who is also a SACRE member, had used this to report to SACRE and the proforma is now out of date. SACRE does receive and scrutinise RS GCSE data in relation to entry patterns and results but cannot readily obtain other details, such as the exam board.

It is not certain that schools will agree to reporting mechanisms, but SACRE is held in high regard in Harrow and its recent publications have further enhanced its reputation.

Information Items: improving SACRE's effectiveness

8. "Re: the Truth Unmasked" an enquiry by the all party parliamentary group on Religious Education (page 11)

The papers for the meeting included a summary of the main findings and recommendations of the all party parliamentary group on religious education (page 11). These will prove useful for Rachel Bowerman's presentation to the Primary Head Teachers. It will be interesting to see if there is any response from the government to the APPG recommendations.

Members felt that the finding of most concern was the supply of RE teachers in primary schools. In a quarter of the schools surveyed, RE is taught by TAs and teacher training for RE is in decline. SACRE does not know how this finding is reflected in Harrow schools. It was suggested that Rachel might investigate this but there are certain problems attendant on extracting this information: Rachel Bowerman felt that a survey would not generate a good response from busy and pressurised Head Teachers. It was suggested that SACRE members might offer to interview Head Teachers. Although Head Teachers would be under no obligation to accept such a proposal, Rachel Bowerman agreed that, with prepared questions and the offer that this would enable schools to improve the quality of RE teaching and learning, this could be a viable proposal. Rachel Bowerman concluded this part of the discussion by proposing that, when she meets with primary and secondary headteachers, she offers a menu of proposals by which SACRE might be able to monitor RE and fulfil its statutory duties. This menu might include: a questionnaire; school reports to SACRE meetings using a standard set of headings; visits to schools by SACRE members using the same questions. **This was agreed.**

In response to a question, Rachel Bowerman affirmed that Head Teachers are aware that it is one of SACRE's duties to monitor the teaching of RE. It is important that schools feel that they have something to gain by participating. It was agreed that it was more effective to proceed via the Head

Teachers than through the RE coordinators. This might also prove to be a way towards recruiting teacher representatives
Rachel Bowerman commented that on the SACRE committee there are now very few vacancies for faith group representatives but two long-standing vacancies for teacher representatives. Her attempts to recruit representatives through the unions has not been successful.

At this point (9.10pm) Cllr Asad Omar and Zia Baig left the meeting

The all party parliamentary group had been set up to explore the current state of RE. Phiroza Gan-Kotwal asked if the Harrow SACRE officer or the Chair should be invited to attend national events held by different faith groups. Rachel Bowerman and the Chair agreed that national representatives from NASACRE and the RE Council might well be invited to such events but it was not really feasible to include local representatives.

9. Reports from National RE Associations

a) RE Council newsletter (pages 12-15). The aim of the RE council is to raise the profile of RE nationally. This is an information item and there were no questions.

b) NASACRE AGM – presentations from two keynote speakers: Alan Brine on “Realising the potential” (pages 16-25) and Mark Chater on “Challenging SACREs” (pages 26-34)

These talks were designed to be provocative. Mark Chater’s talk in particular questioned the value of SACREs and whether they are any longer fit for purpose.

Three questions arose from the discussion following the delivery of these papers and these are included on the agenda and below:

- What can SACREs do to promote closer working with academies in their locality and to mitigate the effects of the general reduction in the LA consultancy support for schools?
- How can SACREs locally and NASACRE nationally best press LAs to comply with their statutory duty to support SACREs?
- What should be the focus of Agreed Syllabus reviews in the context of the national curriculum review and the current stage of the RE subject review?

In addition Rachel Bowerman asked members to consider whether Mark Chater’s description of SACREs fits Harrow SACRE.

Varsha Dodhia expressed the view that a locally determined syllabus promotes community cohesion. Members recalled that in a presentation to the committee last year, the RE leader at Park High school had explained that the department had changed the title of RE to Philosophy and Ethics in order to be more immediately relevant to pupils’ interests. The danger of this is that while RE is statutory, Philosophy and Ethics are not, and when RE is dropped from the curriculum, it cannot easily be restored.

Members were asked to reflect on these questions and consider whether SACREs need to change the way they work with schools or should they disappear?

In the discussion that followed these points emerged:

- The study of RE promotes harmony among different religions and cultures
- RE also promotes understanding among young people
- SACRE members need to be diligent in attendance at meetings and take their duties seriously
- No representative from Harrow SACRE had attended the NASACRE AGM but members have received all the papers and questions arising from the AGM.

c) NASACRE newsletter Summer 2013 (pages 35-50)

This is an information item. There were no questions.

10. Reports from SACRE partners

a) **Harrow Interfaith Council:** Varsha Dodhia reported that the Harrow Interfaith Council has held its AGM. Cardinal Tauran will be visiting the Jain centre in Hertfordshire on 14h June.

b) Faith communities:

- **Jewish Way of Life exhibition:** this will be held at the Pinner Synagogue in summer 2014. Doreen Samuels and Stanley Conway have contacted Rachel Bowerman with regard to possible support from SACRE for this exhibition. This would involve coordinating school visits and providing quality training for teachers. It is an administrative task of some complexity. Rachel Bowerman will prepare an estimate of the administrative costs and the synagogue will consider what contribution it can make to these.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

The training element can be built into the CPD programme. A key element of the exhibition is the fact that groups of pupils are shown round by guides from the local community in a participative way. This promises to be a very worthwhile venture. In reply to a question, Rachel Bowerman thought it was likely that there will be opportunities for the general public to visit the exhibition.

- **Zoroastrian exhibition:** Phiroza Gan-Kotwal informed members that an exhibition of Zoroastrian artefacts is planned to take place at SOAS once adequate funding (£30,000) is raised.

12. AOB

a) SACRE Guidance on Absences

Beverley Wilson, Rastafarian representative, commented that the SACRE guidance on absences had been well received in her school. However, she was disappointed to find that Rastafarian holy days were not included in the 2012 – 2013 guidance. Rachel Bowerman apologised for this while explaining that she had made every effort to contact all faith representatives asking for their contributions. The back page of the guidance will be revised and updated every year, so there will soon be a chance to rectify this omission and make sure that the guide is as inclusive as possible in 2013 – 2014. This depends on members responding to invitations to contribute.

b) RE Artefacts

Rachel Bowerman thanked members for their responses to her appeal to take these artefacts. These are still in boxes under the stage at the Teachers' Centre but she will make time to sort and distribute them.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

c) Comments from Humanist member

Two comments had been received from the Humanist representative who was unable to be present at the meeting. These were read out exactly as they had been emailed.

- 1) The first comment referred to the emphasis on Zoroastrianism found in the Harrow SACRE report under "Celebrating RE 2011". The writer referred to "a serious reality disconnect here which had allowed a minor religion to proselytise to young children from Harrow schools"

Members of the committee made the following responses:

- Phiroza Gan-Kotwal explained that you cannot convert to Zoroastrianism: it is a religion that members have to be born into.
- Rachel Bowerman explained that the context of this event was that the local Zoroastrian community had initiated a celebration of RE at their place of worship and the national Celebrating RE 2011 committee had requested that Harrow schools contribute presentations about Zoroastrianism. She was surprised that any SACRE member should suggest that an event in which SACRE was involved might have been used to proselytise.
- Doreen Samuels expressed the view that the purpose of SACRE is to raise the quality of religious *education* – learning *about* and learning *from* religion;

- In view of the lack of resources available for minority religions, this event was helpful in modelling ways in which pupils could learn about Zoroastrianism, with evidence of progression and continuity from KS 1 to KS 4.
- Neville Ransley emphasised that SACRE is about inclusiveness.

In conclusion, Rachel Bowerman affirmed that converting children into or out of a faith stance plays no part in Agreed Syllabus RE and that all SACRE members – whether representing a faith community or a non-religious group - should understand and affirm the principles and purposes of RE set out in the Agreed Syllabus.

- 2) The second comment referred to Alan Brine’s reference to “militant atheism” at the NASACRE AGM. Responses to this comment had already been made earlier in the meeting (*see minute 6 above*). These reflected the view that both people of faith and those of none sometimes want to convert others to their way of thinking.

d) London Schools Excellence Fund

Phiroza Gan-Kotwal drew members’ attention to a number of bursaries available for Harrow and John Lyon Schools. Although not strictly speaking relevant to the business of SACRE, this remark prompted Rachel Bowerman to mention the Mayor of London’s School Excellence Fund. This fund exists to improve the quality of teaching by improving teachers’ subject knowledge. Members fully supported Rachel Bowerman’s suggestion that SACRE should put in a bid in round 3 of the grants.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

13. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

Future dates have now been confirmed:

Thursday 24th October (not 23rd September) *Apologies from Neville Ransley*
Monday 2nd December
Thursday 6th March.

In response to a question as to why the first meeting of the autumn term had been set to a later date, Rachel Bowerman explained that the earlier date makes it difficult for SACRE to organise a presentation from a school. This year, the original date also coincides with the Jewish festival of Succoth.

The Meeting closed at 9.50 pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)



Harrow SACRE Annual Report 2012 - 2013



Harrow
SACRE



SACRE GUIDANCE TO SCHOOLS

- Publications
- Professional development

GUIDANCE PUBLICATIONS

In 2012 – 2013, Harrow SACRE consulted on and launched two guidance publications for schools and other stakeholders:

a) SACRE Guidance: Authorised absence for religious festivals 2012 – 2013

In the UK, the pattern of the school year takes account of most of the western Christian festivals and holy days. Important days of religious observance in the calendars of other religious traditions and denominations, however, often fall in term time and on school days. SACRE recognizes that parents, who are nurturing children and young people within a faith tradition, want them to be able to engage in those key events which involve corporate worship and celebration and which affirm their religious beliefs.

A long-standing agreement has been established, between SACRE, the LA and schools, whereby up to three days in the school year may be authorised for pupil absence for religious observance. SACRE has traditionally published an annual list of religious festival dates on which absence might be authorised.

At the Autumn 2012 meeting, Patrick O'Dwyer, Educational Professional Lead, ESSO (Education Strategy and School Organisation), outlined the strengthened measures the LA is taking to support schools in promoting good attendance. These include early intervention, support for families and, when necessary, prosecution and penalty notices.

It is in this context that SACRE published new guidance on authorised absence for religious festivals. The guidance has advice status only. In schools it is the Governing Body which determines the school's attendance policy and the headteacher who, on a day to day basis decides whether or not to authorise absence for religious observance.

Published alongside its new guidance is a list of those dates which, in 2012 – 2013, SACRE regard as "*exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.*" These dates are recommended to schools as those on which they would authorise absence from school.

Headteachers have welcomed this publication and its support for their robust approach to improving attendance. They are making reference to it in their discussions with parents and also with staff. The guidance will be reissued in 2013 – 2014 with a new list of dates on which schools are recommended to authorise absence from school for religious observance in the academic year.

b) SACRE Guidance: Offering a space for prayer and reflection in school

In 2011 – 12, SACRE commissioned a local education consultant, who advises on Islam, to draft guidance for schools on the benefits for all pupils of establishing a space for prayer and reflection. In order to ensure that this guidance reflects the particular context of Harrow, a small group of SACRE members visited a local High School to interview students and staff about the practicalities and rationale for providing a space for prayer and what it contributes to the school community.

At Rooks Heath College, the provision of classrooms for male and female staff and students to use for prayer, is well established. Students were surprised by the interest of SACRE members. Prayer for them, as young Muslims, is part of their daily routine

and they expect to be able to fit in their prayer at lunch time as well as to eat their lunch and meet their friends or play football.

Fatima Ibrahim, a teacher in the science department, described a number of benefits to the school community:

- Students who take their prayers seriously are likely to take their academic studies seriously too;
- A school which enable pupils to pray within a secular environment is modelling that it values freedom of religion, respect for diversity and inclusion;
- When Muslim students are observant of their own religious obligations without proselytising and Sunni and Shia Muslims are praying alongside each other in fellowship, they are providing challenging negative stereotypes, Islamophobia and extremism;
- Students of other backgrounds, who see Muslim students using the prayer room unobtrusively but routinely, are seeing role models of self-discipline and time management.

The headteacher and deputy of Welldon Park Junior School gave a presentation at the spring term 2013 SACRE meeting, entitled "Small change, big difference". When a small group of Y6 Muslim pupils had approached the headteacher for permission to pray in school time, the Chair of Governors had contacted SACRE for advice. The head and deputy had been keen to accommodate pupils' religious choices and commitments inclusively within the daily routines of the school. They have developed a code of conduct for those who use the space for prayer and have noticed an impact upon pupils' self-esteem and behaviour; some children enjoy the responsibility and status of leading prayer and are making good choices. Feedback from this group of children, shared with SACRE, was mature and reflective:

"When I pray in the morning, I feel refreshed. Now I feel refreshed at lunchtime!"

"Being quiet helps me not to feel distracted. It helps me not to be distracted in the afternoon."

"Praying helps me to forget bad things that have happened and to make a fresh start."

"It helps me to reflect on what I've done and what I could change to be better."

The final, published guidance includes cameos from these two schools, guidance on the benefits for pupils and for the school community, advice on practical arrangements and faith-specific advice.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP IN RE: SACRE COMMISSIONED SEMINARS FOR RE LEADERS

In 2012 – 13 termly seminars, commissioned by SACRE, were delivered by the HSIP Lead Officer to SACRE.

a) RE leadership

The autumn term 2012 RE leaders' seminar was focused on improving subject leadership. Rachel Bowerman shared the RE subject-specific guidance and grade descriptors as a tool for school self-evaluation, and improvement planning. There was also an introduction to the RE Quality Mark and its criteria for evaluating provision and outcomes in RE.

b) Visit to the Harrow Central Mosque

The spring term 2013 RE leaders' seminar was hosted at the Harrow Central Mosque. Zafar Halid, representative for Harrow Muslim Council on SACRE, and Iftikhar Daad Al-Azhari, Head of the Madrassah, welcomed teachers, took them on a guided tour of the new mosque and held a question and answer session. Rachel Bowerman modelled an approach to teaching about Islam, launching two new units of work for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, which she had developed in consultation with Islamic communities:

- Y5 'How does learning about the Mosque help us to understand community?' – and
- Y2 'Growing up in a Muslim family.'

60% of the HSIP member schools had attended this CPD session and feedback had been very positive. Iftikhar Daad had commended the quality of the teaching and learning materials and the authenticity and sensitivity of the faith-specific training. He and Zafar Halid were in agreement that the approach modelled in the Y5 unit would ensure that pupils and staff were better prepared for visits to the mosque.

c) Planning for RE at Key Stage 1

In response to requests from RE leaders and class teachers, the focus of the summer term seminar was RE at Key Stage 1. Rachel Bowerman modelled a Y2 unit for teaching about Christianity: Growing up in a Christian family. This unit had been developed in consultation with Christian communities. Participants were given CD RoMs with clips of DVD and other visual resources.

SACRE Monitoring and Evaluation of

- Attainment and progress in RE
- Quality of teaching and the extent to which the curriculum delivers the Harrow Agreed Syllabus and meets the needs of pupils
- Leadership and management of RE

Public examination entries and results in RS GCSE and GCE AS and A level in 2013

To be inserted when data available

School Self-evaluation report

At the summer term 2013 meeting the Head of RE and her deputy (who will succeed her when the current leader retires) presented to SACRE their self-evaluation of RE at Rooks Heath College.

Dr Donkor gave a summary of provision for RE at Rooks Heath, including timetable allocations at KS 3 and KS 4 and a broad outline of the KS 3 curriculum, which is designed to meet the requirements of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus. At KS4 all students in Y10 and Y11 follow the Edexcel RS GCSE Short Course: Religion and Life, studying Christianity and one other religion.

He provided broad headlines about pupil attainment. The department makes on entry baseline assessments in Y7 and judges that pupils have made expected progress by the end of KS 3. The 2012 GCSE results broadly reflected pupils' predicted grades and 33 students exceeded expectations by two or more grades.

The quality of teaching in the RE department is judged to be good and this evaluation is based upon lesson observations by the Senior Leadership Team and Ofsted.

Dr Donkor concluded his report on RE at Rooks Heath College by outlining some of the strengths of RE and his priorities for further development. He emphasised that neither the conversion to Academy status nor the introduction of the EBacc has made any difference to the profile of RE or the status of the RE department. RE continues to make a rich contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as was reported by Ofsted. It is a subject in which pupils new to the school or to the country, and for whom English is an additional language, make good progress because the vast majority feel that their religious identity is valued and that they can contribute to the learning as well as engage with it. Dr Donkor is aware that some students would like the department to offer full course GCSE; he continues to regard the short course GCSE as inclusive and accessible to lower attainers. At present, the number of students who would opt for an RS A-level are too small to make it a viable cohort.

A group of four Rooks Heath students gave a presentation. They outlined:

- the contribution of RS to young people's personal, social and moral development, regarding it as a vital element of education for adult life in a plural society
- how the pedagogy of RE - with its emphasis upon learning the ground rules of respectful discussion and debate - were very important. It was suggested that although Harrow is one of the most religiously diverse boroughs, there is less conflict than elsewhere and this might be due both to adherence to religious values and also perhaps to the way in which RE promotes tolerance and respect;
- their perspective upon the status of RE nationally and suggested some ways to enhance the subject's profile with employers and higher education institutions

The students joined with SACRE members in a question and answer session. They were very well prepared, highly articulate and eloquent and very engaging speakers. Good ambassadors for their school and for religious education.

SACRE members continue to be aware that they have no mechanism for carrying out their monitoring role. Although SACRE meetings now feature regular presentations from schools, SACRE still only hears from a very small sample and because schools are not using a common format for their reports, the evidence base, on which to evaluate RE in Harrow, is not robust.

MANAGING THE SACRE AND PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY, SCHOOLS AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Membership
- Partnership with Harrow Council
- Partnership with schools
- Partnership with NASACRE and the RE Council

Meetings

In the academic year 2012 – 2013, SACRE met four times: 10th October and 4th December 2012 and 6th March and 12th June 2013.

Membership

This year Mercedes Afnan replaced Sanaz Missaghian as the Baha'i representative. An additional Christian (Catholic) representative was appointed.

Partnership with schools

In order to raise the profile of SACRE, the Lead LA officer gave a presentation at the summer term meeting of Harrow Head Teachers with the Corporate Director of Children and Families, Catherine Doran. Rachel used this presentation to

- emphasise the importance of SACRE in the local context – using 2011 census data about Harrow's religious diversity and very high percentage of religious affiliation
- remind schools of SACRE's statutory duties in relation to Collective Worship – in 2011 – 12 SACRE published new procedures for applications for a determination and the annual report that year published cameos of good practice in local primary schools
- remind schools of SACRE's statutory duties in relation to RE – monitoring and reporting to the LA on standards and quality of teaching in RE – and of the SACRE-commissioned termly seminars for RE leaders which have helped to develop links with local faith communities
- highlight SACRE's recent guidance publications
- alert headteachers to the forthcoming review of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus.

At the end of the academic year, the Lead SACRE officer was invited to attend the Primary Headteachers' Executive meeting to discuss an agreed scheduling of school reports so that SACRE can obtain regular and consistent information about RE in schools. Having presented them with a menu of ways in which SACRE might monitor the quality of RE in schools, it was agreed that schools should submit a written report annually to SACRE and should use the HSIP self-evaluation form for this.

An article about SACRE and how it can support Governing Bodies fulfilling their responsibilities for provision of RE and Collective Worship, was included in the Harrow Governors Bulletin.

Review of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus

The Chair of SACRE wrote to the Corporate Director Children and Families to inform her that a review of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus is now required. SACRE was mindful of two national initiatives that should be taken into account when shaping the local Agreed Syllabus. The Chair therefore recommended that the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference should commence once the new National Curriculum has been published and there has been a final report from the RE Council and a published response from the government. SACRE also advised the Director that whilst the local academies were not required to deliver the local Agreed Syllabus, they had been invited to nominate two representatives to SACRE and members would be pleased to consider a similar representation on the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Harrow Council has set aside appropriate funds in order to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference and, if the ASC should decide that it is necessary to do so, to develop a new agreed syllabus. SACRE has been asked to put forward proposals regarding the projected costs and timescales for the review and potential syllabus development activities which will commence in 2013 – 2014.

Partnership with NASACRE

Although Harrow SACRE was not represented at the NASACRE AGM, presentations from the two keynote speakers – Alan Brine HMI, National Lead for RE and Mark Chater, Director, Culham St Gabriel's Trust – were included on the agenda for the summer term meeting. Members used questions posed at the AGM to discuss whether SACREs are fit for purpose. Harrow SACRE members affirmed the role of SACRE in championing RE locally and nationally. They regard this as an increasingly relevant and necessary duty. They continue to value the way in which local review of the Agreed Syllabus can galvanise new interest in RE and furnish a new entitlement to training.

At its summer term meeting, SACRE also discussed summary report of "The Truth Unmasked" an enquiry by the all party parliamentary group on Religious Education.

No collective worship advice was requested in 2012 – 2013 and there were no applications for determinations.

Still to insert:

- Membership list
- Financial statement – HSIP delivery of professional advice to SACRE
- GCSE / A Level data analysis



**SACRE GUIDANCE:
Authorised absence for religious festivals 2013 - 2014**



Harrow Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

Authorised Absence for Religious festivals: Guidance for headteachers and Governing Bodies

This document has advice status. It is the Governing Body which determines the school's attendance policy. On a day to day basis, the headteacher implements that policy and decides whether or not to authorise absence for religious observance, balancing religious requirements with the importance of regular attendance.

Context

In the UK, the pattern of the school year takes account of most of the western Christian festivals and holy days. Important days of religious observance in the calendars of other religious traditions and denominations, however, often fall in term time and on school days.

Those parents, who are nurturing children and young people within a faith tradition, understandably want them to be able to engage in those key events which involve corporate worship and celebration and which affirm their religious beliefs. Schools will want to be sensitive to parental requests for the authorisation of absence for religious observance because they recognize that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity and contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Whilst sympathetic to the need of families to remain in contact with relatives and their 'heritage' overseas, headteachers will seldom authorise absence for extended visits abroad because of the consequences for pupils' attendance and learning.

Guidance to school leaders

In preparing this guidance, SACRE has taken full account of current legislation in relation to attendance:

"The child shall not be taken to have failed to attend regularly at the school by reason of his absence from the school -

(c) on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parent belongs"

Education Act 1996, Part VI, Chapter II, Paragraph 444

A long-standing agreement has been established within the Local Authority that up to three days in the school year may be authorised for pupil absence for religious observance. SACRE has traditionally published an annual list of religious festival dates on which absence might be authorised. Harrow SACRE is aware that headteachers have requested further guidance in order that this agreement does not diminish robust procedures aimed at improving attendance. SACRE therefore advises that:-

- headteachers should authorise absence **only** for a festival date 'exclusively set apart by the religious body;
- if a festival date has not been 'exclusively set apart' on the SACRE list or by the relevant religious body, headteachers might enquire whether religious observance can be accommodated outside of school hours;¹
- in some religious calendar years, a 'religious body' sets apart holy days on which religious observance will require absence from school amounting to more than three week-days in term time² and headteachers are advised to consider this sensitively;

¹ In the Christian tradition, for example, Ash Wednesday observance does not require absence from school and families can attend church for worship outside of school hours.

² The Board of Deputies of British Jews, for example, publishes a Jewish Holiday Calendar indicating those days on which obligations and restrictions similar to Shabbat apply. In some years of the Jewish calendar, this will amount to more than 3 days on which Jews are obliged to be absent from school, because work is forbidden.

- absence taken on a school day for a festival falling at a weekend, or in a school holiday, would not be authorised;
- additional days taken on either side of the festival day would not be authorised;
- the LA agreement of up to 3 days should not be viewed as an entitlement which is to be taken in full. For example, if only 1 festival day falls on a week day in term time then a school would only authorise that 1 day's absence. The school would not authorise an additional 2 days absence;

The needs of different religious groups

Within some religious traditions, observance varies between different denominations and communities. Ashura, for example, is a relatively minor festival for Sunni Muslims but a holy day of major significance for the Shia community.

Whilst headteachers and teachers must ensure that requests are genuine and reasonable, they are recommended not to doubt a request on grounds that other families of the same faith have not requested absence on the same day or at the same time. It may be the case that:

- the level of observance differs amongst families within the same faith tradition;
- a particular denominational or cultural grouping observes different holy days to other groups within the same faith;
- some pupils, though growing up within a faith community, may prefer to attend school on festival days.

What can schools do to meet the needs of families from religious traditions whilst promoting high attendance rates?

Harrow schools are aware of the religious communities represented within their school and are advised to take reasonable steps to ensure, whenever possible, that events in the school diary – such as parents evenings, school performances - do not clash with days of significant religious importance to pupils and staff.³

As part of their written communications with families, some schools send a termly or annual proforma asking for advance information of requests for absence for religious observance. However, some communities may not be able to identify festival dates that far in advance. Parents should be asked to give the school as much notice of a proposed absence as is reasonably possible and be willing to discuss with the school how pupils will catch up with work missed.

For religiously observant children and young people there are expectations of religious prayer and observance throughout the year. Schools can usually make provision for pupils to fulfil these observances without the need for absence during the school day. For example, through consultation with the Muslim communities represented within the school, a prayer room and nearby facilities for washing can enable young Muslims to perform salah on the school site (see SACRE Guidance on offering a place for prayer and reflection).

SACRE has been involved in the Consultation with Schools on the Local Authority's Duties and Legal Measures to Secure School Attendance. Although absences are no longer separately categorized as authorised and unauthorised, SACRE encourages schools to analyse attendance data against a range of criteria, including absence each half-term for religious observance.

³ Indirect discrimination may occur if provision is applied generally but has the effect of disadvantaging those with a particular 'characteristic.' (Equality Act 2010 – DfE Advice for School leaders Sept 2012)

SACRE Guidance: Dates ‘set apart’ for religious observance 2013 – 2014

SACRE has traditionally published an annual list of religious festival dates. In line with its newly published and robust guidance to school leaders, representatives of local faith communities have identified those dates which they regard as “*exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.*” These dates are recommended to schools as those on which they would authorise absence from school.

This list can only have advice status because the reference in law to “*the religious body to which the parent belongs*” is not easily defined. Within faith communities there may be a range of religious ‘bodies’, which are invested - locally, nationally and internationally - with the status of determining which festivals require absence from school and the exact date on which a festival should be celebrated.

	Spring Term 2014	Summer Term 2014	Autumn Term 2014
Baha’i	21/03/14 New Year	23/05/14 The Declaration of the Bab	12/11/14 The Birth of Baha’u’llah
In the Baha’i tradition it is recommended that, where possible, work is suspended on these days.			
Buddhism		13/05/14 Vesakha Puja / Buddha Day	08/12/14 Bodhi Day*
Such is the religious, cultural and ethnic diversity within Buddhism that different Buddhist denominations – for example Theravada, Mahayana - follow different religious calendars. The same festival may be celebrated on different dates and different Buddhist communities will celebrate different festivals. Within those traditions that follow a lunar calendar, New Year Festivals may be religiously significant. These include Lhosar (New Year within the Tibetan and Nepalese Buddhist communities) and Songkran for Thai Buddhists. Many Buddhist communities celebrate their religious festivals collectively on the nearest Sunday.			
Christianity	06/01/14 Epiphany 06/01/14 Christmas Eva (Eastern Orthodox) 07/01/14 Christmas Day (Eastern Orthodox tradition) 03/03/14 Great Lent Fast (Orthodox)		
In the Orthodox tradition Easter is calculated using the Julian calendar. It is a ‘moveable’ feast and so the date of Easter, and the beginning of the Lenten fast, will differ every year. In 2013 Pascha, the Orthodox Easter Sunday, falls on 20.04.13.			
Hinduism			23/10/2014 Hindu New Year/Diwali
Such is the diversity within Hinduism that almost every working day might be a festival. However, few Hindu festivals require a day off school. In most temples, observances take place in the evenings in recognition of the need to attend work and school. Hindu communities in the UK also tend to celebrate festivals collectively on the nearest Sunday, either before or after major festivals, for the same reason. Most observances during the 5 days of Diwali take place in the evening and it is not necessary for pupils to be absent from school on each of those days. Krishna Janmashtami is a key festival for many Hindus but in 2014 it falls in the school summer holiday (17.08.14).			
Islam			03/11/14 Ashura** (Shia)
In 2014 Ramadan will be observed from 29.06.14 – 27.07.14. There is no religious obligation requiring pupils to be absent from school during Ramadan. However, Muslim pupils, parents and staff will welcome the provision of a space for prayer and thoughtful arrangements at lunchtime. *A range of methods is used to determine when Eid begins. Muslim families will follow their masjid or community leaders. Therefore parents from different Muslim communities may request absence for Eid on two different dates and some may not be able to calculate the date in advance because they must sight the moon. In 2014 Eid-ul-Fitr falls on 29.09.14 in the school summer holiday. ** Shia Muslims might request absence on Ashura.			

Jainism			23/10/2014 Diwali (New Year)
<p>In 2013 Mahavir Janma Kalyanak - Mahavir's birthday - (03.11.2013) falls on a Sunday. Jains are likely to request absence for one day at Diwali, that is for New Year. On other festival days, observance can be fulfilled in after school hours unless a family has pledged to partake in a special puja, aarti, mangal diva, or shanti kalash. Sometimes extended families plan a special pilgrimage. The Jain representative on SACRE urges that schools make decisions about authorising student absence for these rare pilgrimages that are consistent with decisions about authorisation of absence for Hajj. Jains of the Svetambara tradition may request absence on Samvatsari (Bhadarva vad choth) on 09.09.13</p>			
Judaism		22/04/14 Pesach 6/05/14 Yom Ha'atzma'ut 04-05/06/14 Shavot	25 – 26/09/14 Rosh Hashanah 9-10/10/14 & 13-16/10/14 Sukkot 17/10/14 Simchat Torah
<p>Jewish law prohibits work on the Sabbath and certain festivals. The traditional Jewish interpretation of work includes any kind of creative activity, such as writing, operating equipment, such as computers and telephones, and traveling, other than on foot. Attending classes and taking examinations are classified as work. There is no provision in Jewish law for a dispensation to be given from these religious obligations. However, levels of observance vary between families.</p>			
Rastafarian	07.01.14 Ethiopian Christmas Day		11/09/14 Ethiopian New Years Day 02/11/14 Anniversary of Crowning of Haile Selassie I
Sikhism			23/10/14 Diwali 06/11/14 Birthday of Guru Nanak
<p>In 2013 dates corresponding to the Nanakshahi calendar fall at the weekend or during the holidays: Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh 05.01.14 Vaisakhi 13.04.14</p>			
Zoroastrianism	21.03.14 Jamsdeedi NoRuz*		
<p>* Observance on Jamsdeedi NoRuz will not require a day's absence. However, families may have a thanks giving prayer ceremony in the morning followed by a festive breakfast, and so children would be late coming to school.</p>			

For a full calendar of Religious Festivals in 2013 – 2014 please see the Shap Calendar which is available on subscription at www.shap.org

Report summary

Religious education: realising the potential

Religious education (RE) should make a major contribution to the education of children and young people. At its best, it is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. It helps young people develop beliefs and values, and promotes the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. It fosters civilised debate and reasoned argument, and helps pupils to understand the place of religion and belief in the modern world.

The past 10 years have seen some improvements in RE in schools. More pupils recognise its value and nearly two thirds of them left school with an accredited qualification in the subject in 2012. The range and quality of resources to support teaching in this subject are much better than they were.

However, evidence from the majority of schools visited for this survey shows that the subject's potential is still not being realised fully. Many pupils leave school with scant subject knowledge and understanding. Moreover, RE teaching often fails to challenge and extend pupils' ability to explore fundamental questions about human life, religion and belief.

Ofsted's previous report on RE in 2010, *Transforming religious education*, highlighted key barriers to better RE and made recommendations about how these should be overcome. The current survey found that not enough has been done since 2010.

The structures that underpin the local determination of the RE curriculum have failed to keep pace with changes in the wider educational world. As a result, many local authorities are struggling to fulfil their responsibility to promote high-quality religious education. In addition, other changes to education policy, such as the introduction in 2010 of the English Baccalaureate (the EBacc), have led to a decline in RE provision in some schools.

Part A of this report discusses eight major areas of concern:

- low standards
- weak teaching

- problems in developing a curriculum for RE
- confusion about the purpose of RE
- weak leadership and management
- weaknesses in examination provision at Key Stage 4
- gaps in training
- the impact of recent changes in education policy.

Part B of this report provides examples of effective practice in using enquiry as a basis for improving pupils' learning, high-quality leadership and management in primary and secondary schools, and effective approaches in special schools. Overall, however, such good practice is not sufficiently widespread.

The report is based on evidence drawn from 185 schools visited between September 2009 and July 2012. It also draws on evidence from a telephone survey of a further 30 schools, examination results, other reports published by Ofsted, extended discussions with teachers, members of standing advisory councils on religious education (SACREs) and other RE professionals, and wider surveys carried out by professional associations for RE. The sample of schools did not include voluntary aided schools or academies with a religious designation, for which separate inspection arrangements exist.

Key findings

- Weaknesses in provision for RE meant that too many pupils were leaving school with low levels of subject knowledge and understanding.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 90 primary schools visited were less than good in six in 10 schools.
- Achievement and teaching in RE in the 91 secondary schools visited were only good or better in just under half of the schools. The picture was stronger at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than at Key Stage 3.
- Most of the GCSE teaching seen failed to secure the core aim of the examination specifications: that is, to enable pupils 'to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion'.
- The provision made for GCSE in the majority of the secondary schools surveyed failed to provide enough curriculum time for pupils to extend and deepen their learning sufficiently.
- The teaching of RE in primary schools was not good enough because of weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject, a lack of emphasis on subject knowledge, poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective monitoring and teachers' limited access to effective training.

- The way in which RE was provided in many of the primary schools visited had the effect of isolating the subject from the rest of the curriculum. It led to low-level learning and missed opportunities to support pupils' learning more widely, for example, in literacy.
- The quality of teaching in the secondary schools visited was rarely outstanding and was less than good in around half of the lessons seen. Common weaknesses included: insufficient focus on subject knowledge; an over-emphasis on a limited range of teaching strategies that focused simply on preparing pupils for assessments or examinations; insufficient opportunity for pupils to reflect and work independently; and over-structured and bureaucratic lesson planning with a limited focus on promoting effective learning.
- Although the proportion of pupils taking GCSE and GCE examinations in RE remains high, in 2011 nearly 250 schools and academies did not enter any pupils for an accredited qualification in GCSE.
- Around half of the secondary schools visited in 2011 and 2012 had changed, or were planning to change, their curriculum provision for RE in response to changes in education policy. The impact of these changes varied but it was rarely being monitored carefully.
- Assessment in RE remained a major weakness in the schools visited. It was inadequate in a fifth of the secondary schools and a third of the primary schools. Many teachers were confused about how to judge how well pupils were doing in RE.
- Access to high-quality RE training for teachers was poor. Training had a positive impact on improving provision in only a third of the schools visited; its impact was poor in a further third. Many of the schools surveyed said that support from their local authority and SACRE had diminished.
- Leadership and management of RE were good or better in half the schools visited; however, weaknesses were widespread in monitoring provision for RE and in planning to tackle the areas identified for improvement.
- The effectiveness of the current statutory arrangements for RE varies considerably. Recent changes in education policy are having a negative impact on the provision for RE in some schools and on the capacity of local authorities and SACREs to carry out their statutory responsibilities to monitor and support it.



RE REVIEW DISSEMINATION EVENTS

In summer 2012, the RE Council initiated a review of religious education in England to run parallel to the government's review of the National Curriculum, as part of its strategic plan. After a year of consultation and deliberation within and beyond the RE community, the final report of the RE Review will be published on 23rd October 2013 and launched at Westminster.

The Review Report contains a non statutory RE curriculum framework for syllabus makers in England, whether agreed syllabus conferences, faith community bodies, academy chains or individual schools. It also includes an overview of the factors which affect the provision of RE in schools, such as training and professional development, qualifications and exams, local or national subject determination, research and the RE classroom and how RE stakeholders can best work together for the good of the subject and its impact on young people.

Please come to find out more about this significant report. Attendees will receive a free copy of the printed report and will be able to hear short presentations on the report from teachers, advisers, SACRE members, academics and others active in the field of RE.

All events will take place from 5.30 to 7.30 with refreshments provided beforehand.

To book a place please contact sophie@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk as space at each event is limited. Admission is free of charge but ticketed.

Where and when?

DATE	VENUE	CHAIR
Tuesday 5 November	Institute of Education, London	John Keast OBE
Wednesday 6 November	York St John University	Professor Julian Stern
Tuesday 19 November	Oxford University Press, Oxford	John Keast OBE
Thursday 21 November	Liverpool Hope University	Joy Schmack
Thursday 28 November	University of Bristol	Dr Janet Orchard

This page is intentionally left blank