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Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)



Annual Report 2019 - 2020

**Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council
on Religious Education:
Annual Report 2019- 2020**

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Chair's Introduction

I began last year's introduction by saying how strange it was to report many months after the end of the school year and how tempting it was to write about what we were doing at the time of writing. Be careful what you wish for! I began writing this introduction in the last weeks of the 2019/20 school year because it felt as if the year ended in March. There would be no formal examination results to report, outreach and training activities are halted and SACRE was not able to meet in June.

I am now writing a few days before Christmas, which for many has been changed beyond recognition by Covid. It was the same for Eid and Diwali. We will not forget 2020 in a hurry! Or will we? Has this pandemic taught us anything? I heard someone say, when looking back to the Spanish 'Flu epidemic of 1918/19, that there are cycles of panic, followed by complacency and forgetting. The speaker thought we would revert to our old ways and will not take the steps necessary to protect ourselves. This will not be the case in education where every school is adapting. Schools are already different and will be more so in the coming terms. Let us hope that the full curriculum returns with RE taking a full role.

No doubt many questions about the pandemic will come from children, some of which be asked in RE lessons. Our agreed syllabus was deliberately created to be flexible. Teachers will be able to adapt their RE work to fit the mood. When schools get back to work under the 'new normal', teachers will not simply be picking up where they were. They will be dealing with children who have had many different experiences of lockdown and home schooling. Amanda Fitton, our RE Adviser has been preparing guidance for teachers which we hope they have found useful.

SACRE continues to be under financed. The County Council has no money for SACRE. The committee members get no assistance with travel to meetings, not even a cup of tea on arrival. Now we must make our own tea as we sit at our own desks and meet over the internet. Any work we do for schools or in schools has had to be third party funded. Grants are not easy to come by and applications take a lot of time. Amanda works hard to raise monies from teacher training sessions.

Our 2019/20 year began in November with an Interfaith Day for GCSE students in Ely Cathedral. It was a highly successful day thanks to the organisational skills of the Cathedral team working with our own Amanda and Laura. The day would not have been possible without the faith representatives and their supporters who gave their well-prepared talks three times and then participated in a 'Question Time'. They must have been exhausted. It was disappointing that some schools dropped out. They missed something good. The event was sponsored by the European funded Pathway through Religions Project.

The NASACRE/Westhill Award grant funded project, now called the Fenland Schools Project, working with primary schools in the Fens and faith representatives, is sadly now on hold. We held planning meetings in the autumn and a training day in early spring. We had planned to hold some trial sessions in schools in the summer term. The Westhill Trustees have agreed to allow the funding to be carried over to next year. We may have to rethink the project delivery stage, to fit in with new school life.

My thanks as always to Amanda and Laura without whom SACRE would not keep going and to the faith representatives who come to SACRE meetings in the spirit of cooperation and friendship.

Julia Ewans
Chair Cambridgeshire SACRE

The Purpose of the Report

Religious Education is an important curriculum subject. It is important in its own right and also makes a unique contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils and supports wider community cohesion. The Government is keen to ensure all pupils receive high-quality Religious Education.

The Education Act 1996, Section 391 (6) and (7) requires that each year the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) from each Local Authority will publish a report as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by the representative groups on the Council during the last preceding year.

The work of SACRE includes:

- advising the Local Authority on Religious Education given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
- monitoring the provision and quality of Religious Education taught according to its Agreed Syllabus, together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus;
- providing advice and support on the effective teaching of Religious Education in accordance with the locally Agreed Syllabus;
- providing advice to the Local Authority and its schools on methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training;
- in partnership with its Local Authority, considering whether any changes need to be made in the Agreed Syllabus or in the support offered to schools in the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus, to improve the quality of teaching and learning of RE;
- offering advice to the Local Authority, and through the Local Authority to schools, concerning how an existing Agreed Syllabus can be interpreted so as to fit in with a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum.

Management of SACRE

Cambridgeshire County Council has continued to support the work of SACRE through funding that provides a clerk for the meetings, services of an RE Adviser to support SACRE, its work and teacher training for the teaching of Religious Education, and advice about Collective Worship. The Religious Education Adviser, Amanda Fitton, has continued to work with all the Cambridgeshire schools and SACRE.

Every Local Authority has to convene a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Cambridgeshire SACRE, which has met three times this year, comprises four statutory groups. Attendance at meetings has been variable however all committees are well represented.

The four groups that make up SACRE are as follows:

- Committee A - representatives of non-Anglican Christian denominations, other religions, and world-view communities;
- Committee B - representatives of the Church of England;
- Committee C - representatives of the teachers' associations;
- Committee D – representatives of the Local Authority.

SACRE welcomed new members:

Isobel Rawinson (Church Schools of Cambridge representative)

Dr Imam Sejad Mekic (Muslim representative)

We said farewell to Shahla Suleiman (Muslim representative)

We thank all members for their contributions to SACRE.

Secondary Schools

Monitoring Secondary RE Provision

Due to Covid 19 GCSE and A level results for August 2020 were based on assessment grades provided by individual schools and the government has not published any data for individual schools for the exams taken in 2020

Areas of development

All secondary schools need to be made aware of their statutory duty to provide RE to all pupils up to the end of Year 11 and preferably through either a whole or half GCSE. Schools need to be made aware of the benefits to students in studying RE to A level and the correlation with entries to Oxford and Cambridge universities and the Russell group of Universities.

Primary Schools

Monitoring Primary RE Provision

Network Meetings

The primary network meetings for the academic year have been led Amanda Fitton (RE Adviser). Only two sets of meetings were held in the Autumn and Spring terms of 2019 and 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Those who attended the meetings were able to take away copies of PowerPoints and other resources. The meetings covered a variety of different topics to support RE in primary schools. These were; 'RE across the Curriculum and OFSTED' and 'Considering Similarities and Difference in religions and world views'. Network meetings will continue into the next academic year. SACRE would like to thank the following schools for hosting the meetings, Saint Michaels C of E primary, William De Yaxley Academy and Chevely Primary c of E primary.

Training

Training continued to be popular with a range of training being held until March 2020 and have continued to support schools with the new syllabus. Themes for the year have ranged from; Planning an RE Curriculum, new to RE and SMSC and Collective worship. The courses were well attended from a variety of schools across the county.

Agreed Syllabus

The 2018 – 2023 syllabus still applies to all schools in Cambridgeshire.

Support for Improving the Teaching of the Local Agreed Syllabus

NASACRE Conference

Due to the pandemic the annual NASACRE meeting was cancelled.

Westhill Project

SACRE put in a bid to Westhill for £3,558 and were awarded this amount at the NASACRE conference in May 2019. SACRE identified that schools in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire often have difficulties in accessing people of different faiths and world views and where relevant their places of worship.

Work began on the project with a number of schools and SACRE members joining the working party. Initial meetings were held to explore ideas and identify what was required. A training session was held at Buckden village hall in early February 2020 for all the teachers and faith and world view representatives. Thank you to Townley Primary, Calvery Primary and Shade Primary Schools for being involved and Buckden Primary for providing a willing audience of children to practice on. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic the project was put on temporary hold.

RE Newsletter

The newsletter has been sent out every term over the academic year, with an extra newsletter for the summer term 2020 to support schools through the Covid 19 pandemic. The newsletter has been a mixture of news from the RE world, advice, notifications and links to resources.

Faith Direct Event

Faith Direct event was held in conjunction with Ely Cathedral to support secondary schools with the RE GCSE. It was held on November 18th 2019 at Ely Cathedral and faith and all the major faiths and world views were represented (apart from Buddhism). Ten schools from across Cambridgeshire attended with 160 pupils taking part.

Development plan for 2019 -20

The main aim of the development plan for 2019 – 2020 was to work with schools on the Westhill project.

Consultancies

There were no consultancies during this period.

Formal Complaints

There have been no formal complaints made to the Local Authority.

Relevant Links

- Learn Together Cambridgeshire: Religious Education Advisory Service
(Services & Charges and Courses & Training)

<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/religious-education/>

- Cambridgeshire County Council:

Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/working-together-children-families-and-adults/working-with-partners/cambridgeshire-standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education/>

Meetings held in 2019-20

Wednesday 2nd October

Wednesday 5th February

Thursday 18 June

Details of the agenda items, attendance at the meetings and minutes of the meetings can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council SACRE website at

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/working-together-children-families-and-adults/working-with-partners/cambridgeshire-standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education/>

**If you have any comments about this report, please contact the Cambridgeshire
SACRE Clerk via e-mail at laura.corcoran@peterborough.gov.uk**