

Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)



Annual Report 2013 - 2014

Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education: Annual Report 2013 - 2014

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Chairman's Introduction from Tony Orgee

The past year has been busy for the Cambridgeshire SACRE as it promotes good standards in Religious Education and advises the Local Authority about matters connected with Collective Worship and Religious Education in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus.

Following the launch of the new local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, work continues to provide teachers with the help and support necessary for successful implementation.

The Cambridgeshire SACRE is very aware that Religious Education can make a useful contribution to a range of activities that help our young people understand and respect the various faith traditions.

The Cambridgeshire SACRE brings together faith representatives, teachers and councillors, and would like to thank all members for the way in which they have worked constructively together. I would also like to place on record the fact that the Cambridgeshire SACRE owes a great debt of gratitude to Sue Ward, the RE Adviser for Cambridgeshire, for all her excellent advice, support and guidance over the past year and to Steph Boothroyd for her invaluable administrative support throughout the year.

I am pleased to commend this report to you.

**Councillor Tony Orgee
Chair, Cambridgeshire SACRE**

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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.

This entails:

- 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

The Local Authority 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. Despite significant cutbacks in many Local Authorities, Cambridgeshire County Council has continued to support SACRE and its work.

With the changing face of education both nationally and locally in the past year, SACRE has had to re-consider its role and purpose. The Non-Statutory Framework for Religious Education was produced

in October 2013 and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales states it to be a significant document to use to inform a locally determined Agreed Syllabus Conference for Religious Education. This will be taken into account when the review of Cambridgeshire's Agreed Syllabus happens in 2017.

Following the launch of the 2013 Agreed Syllabus, SACRE has invited schools to share their views about the effectiveness of the syllabus and their use of levels, to inform SACRE whether young people are working and achieving the appropriate levels for Religious Education at each of the Key Stages. This year has been the first year to gather evidence from schools but it will be formally reported upon in September 2015.

During the year, SACRE has been dealing with the composition of SACRE membership and reviewing its Constitution. Legal advice has been sought and acted upon to ensure a wide breadth of representatives from faith and world-view communities, teacher unions, the Church of England and local County Councillors on 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. Most notably, there has been a decline in regular attendance by non-Christian faith representation.

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.

We said farewell to Kate Lund (Primary Headteacher and Roman Catholic representative) and welcomed two new Councillors, Ed Cearns and Jocelyne Scutt, from the County Council. From the NASUWT, SACRE welcomed Tom Watkins (a secondary RE teacher). SACRE also secured the services of a Jewish representative from the Reform Jewish community, namely Aga Cahn. Following the resignation of the British Humanist Association representative due to ill health, the BHA appointed a replacement member, Julia Ewans. There continues to be a vacancy for a Sikh representative. New members have provided materials and advice to support the Agreed Syllabus. SACRE members have written materials to support the syllabus, and we are grateful to Liz Bassett and Moira Middleton.

There have been two presentations given to SACRE members on issues that need support in schools. Chris Westgarth from SMSC Online gave an excellent presentation on the importance of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education. This has become a key focus of Ofsted inspections in schools. Bethan Rees, Manager of Cambridgeshire Race, Equality and Diversity Service (CREDS) gave a presentation entitled 'Celebrating Difference, Challenging Homophobia and Transphobia'. Both these presentations resulted in two SACRE sub-groups being set up to consider suitable guidance and support to schools. It was agreed that a member of SACRE should monitor the outcomes of Ofsted reports and comments about SMSC development, and report back to SACRE termly.

Other important matters that have been discussed are the Ofsted long report on Religious Education in England, 'Religious Education: Realising the Potential' (Ref No: 130068). It was noted that there is still much work needed to support teachers, especially in the primary phase.

A paper from Dr Mark Chater, Director of Culham St Gabriel's, was presented to all SACREs about 'The Future of SACREs'. There were mixed reactions about the paper. The general consensus was that there is a need for a national consensus on the content of Religious Education but that there is a monitoring role for local SACREs to support good RE.

The Development Plan was revised in the light of changes in the Local Authority. The Local Authority support for SACRE continues with the provision of a clerk and an RE Adviser to support the work of SACRE.

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 www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/279/children_and_families_working_with_partners/3.

Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

Secondary Schools

Monitoring Secondary RE Provision

With only one secondary school within the remit of the Local Authority, the monitoring role of SACRE is further affected. Good working relationships have been established with some academies but it is difficult for SACRE to carry out its functions of monitoring the quality and provision of Religious Education in secondary schools satisfactorily.

Secondary network meetings supported by SACRE have continued to happen once a term. SACRE is grateful to The Netherhall School and Cottenham Village College for agreeing to host secondary network meetings. A small but resilient group of teachers from 8 secondary schools have met to share concerns such as changes to KS4 and KS5 Religious Studies, the new Ofsted HMI report, the RE review, as well as sharing good practice and resources. There is evidence of cutbacks in the number of qualified teachers of Religious Education and cuts in provision for KS4 RE on the timetable which impacts upon the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Several schools provide a carousel of a range of subjects at KS4, thus not fulfilling the requirements of statutory RE at KS4 and KS5. Some schools are starting GCSE courses in Year 9. Early entry means that KS3 has been impoverished in time and depth. The foundations for good understanding at GCSE are undermined.

Areas for Development

- The continuing impact of the changes to KS4 needs to be carefully monitored;
- Some schools are not fulfilling the legal requirements at KS4, in terms of time allocation.

Subject Strengths and Weaknesses

- **A-Level Entries:** At A-Level, 100% of students achieved A-E grades, 43.5% grades A*-B. It is pleasing to note that all students gained a pass at A-Level. However, the percentage pass of A*-B was surprisingly lower than the national average of 51.7% for A*-B. This raises a question as to why this is happening. There is little significant change in the numbers entering for A-Level across the county.
- **AS-Level Entries:** Numbers have risen very slightly from the previous year but overall there is a general decline which is not surprising due to changes in the A-Level system introduced in 2013. The percentage pass A*-E has varied year on year. This year showed a sharp decline in levels of achievement by 14.1% but it should be noted that entries were very low (22 in 2013 and 27 in 2014).
- **GCSE Full-Course Entries:** Entry levels for the full-course numbers have fallen slightly, as has the number of centres entering students for the exam. This is contrary to the national trend that has seen a rise of 6.5% in overall numbers entered for the exam. It is also interesting to note that nationally in the last 10 years the numbers entered for full-course GCSE Religious Studies have risen from 141,037 in 2004 to 282,099 in 2014. This trend has been mirrored in some of our secondary schools. However, the decline in student entries and numbers of centres entering students in Cambridgeshire in 2014 is against the national trend. Reasons for this are many and include a lack of qualified teachers to teach the subject, time on the timetable and the fact that the E-Baccalaureate subjects exclude Religious Studies. Percentage pass rates for A*-C grades have risen this year for the full-course by 3.3% - schools are to be congratulated for this increase. SACRE also congratulates particularly St Bede's Inter-Church Secondary School for entering Year 11 students for AS-Level and achieving highly.
- **GCSE Short-Course Entries:** The number of entries have risen. It would appear that many schools still see the value of a short-course in Religious Education as it validates the statutory requirement for RE at this Key Stage (see Appendix 2). However, the fact that the entries for both full and short-course represent only 49.3% of the total cohort for Year 11 pupils raises the question 'What provision is being made for the statutory entitlement for Religious Education for the other 50.7% of the cohort in the county?'

Primary Schools

Monitoring Primary RE Provision

Just over 55% of primary schools were given e-mail or telephone advice during the academic year. Support was mainly given to RE subject leaders or Headteachers. Advice included planning the primary curriculum, assessment, implementing the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus, and

how Religious Education fits into the new national curriculum. A small number of queries centred around Collective Worship and the right to withdraw from Collective Worship and Religious Education.

The Agreed Syllabus invites schools to share their teacher assessment levels for pupils at the end of each Key Stage with SACRE, as part of their monitoring role. However, SACRE deferred the request due to a significant number of schools indicating that they were still embedding assessment levels in Religious Education. SACRE will ask schools to submit their data at the end of September 2015. SACRE issued a questionnaire to schools asking for their views on the usefulness of the Agreed Syllabus to support Religious Education - details of this will be reported in the next academic year's report.

Joint working between the Diocesan and the Local Authority Advisers has meant that four primary school network meetings per term have been held across the county to ensure some access to professional development for teachers of Religious Education. SACRE is grateful to all the schools that offer to host the meetings. These were attended by over 85 teachers. This was a unique opportunity for subject leaders to come together to share good practice and begin to increase subject knowledge for different religions. Feedback from these meetings shows that the interest in Religious Education by teachers and pupils alike has improved. The enquiry-based learning pedagogical approach is inspiring teachers.

SACRE is well aware that the quality of leadership and management is of the utmost importance. Where Religious Education is strong in any school, the subject leader is committed, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. This is true for primary, secondary and special schools. SACRE is pleased to note that most schools have an RE Co-ordinator but it is concerning that there is frequent change of this role which does not lead to consistency of practice and opportunities to monitor the quality of RE are not always forthcoming. It is reported that many schools use HLTAs and TAs to deliver RE in PPA time. This makes it harder for the subject and the teaching to connect with the rest of the school curriculum in some cases. On the other hand, there are some committed HLTAs and TAs who are delivering high-quality RE. Primary schools deliver some of their time allocation for RE through visits and visitors, creative curriculum time, termly RE afternoons or themed RE weeks, as well as weekly lesson periods on the timetable. All these approaches can greatly enhance pupils' experience of RE but care needs to be taken in order to ensure that time requirements and the delivery of all parts of the programmes of study laid down in the Agreed Syllabus can still be met. The non-statutory schemes of work for the core units have attempted to address this issue by providing guidance on the flexible use of curriculum plans.

Special Schools

One school entered students for Certificate of Education level in Religious Studies with success. Colleagues from special schools have attended the training events and the network meetings.

Teachers from special schools have attended network meetings and reported adapting their schemes of work to suit their children.

Support for Improving the Teaching of the Local Agreed Syllabus

Action Research Project to Raise Standards in Religious Education

Following the success of two-day training, as part of an Action Research Project with Dilwyn Hunt, entitled 'Improving RE Through Better Assessment', 22 teachers across Key Stages 1-3 have engaged in a project to consider what progress looks like in Religious Education across the Key Stages. Teachers from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough came together to consider tasks that show progress. Then they were encouraged to implement them. The outcomes have still to be shared but it is hoped that a better understanding about progression, rigour and challenge will be developed, thus leading to improved outcomes for young people.

Further schemes of work have been created to support the Agreed Syllabus and sent to all primary schools. Thanks must go to all schools and colleagues who have contributed to the new schemes of work. There is still more to do to complete schemes for all the core units.

A flexible tool for assisting teachers to use with their own school planning has been created and sent to all schools in the primary phase. Copies of support materials on the discs can be obtained from the Clerk to Cambridgeshire SACRE at RE.SACRE@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. Schools are free to use, improve on or disregard the supplementary documents as required.

A range of courses has been offered throughout the year by the RE Adviser and outside speakers Gill Vaisey and Dilwyn Hunt, which have been very well received by the teachers who gained invaluable knowledge and understanding about developing RE in EYFS and KS1 and on Assessment in RE. 159 teachers have attended courses about improving knowledge of the Abrahamic and Eastern Religions, understanding how to achieve outstanding RE and how to plan effective RE and Collective Worship.

There has been a significant rise in the number of primary schools requesting consultancy/ training from the RE Adviser. On average, one school per week requested support with planning RE in the new curriculum or developing SMSC in RE, or improving subject knowledge of the religions. As this is usually at school staff meetings, it has meant a considerable increase in the number of teachers receiving CPD compared to in the past.

Training to Governors has also increased as the importance of RE, Collective Worship and SMSC development have risen to the fore in the light of the 'Trojan Horse Affair' in Birmingham in Spring 2014.

The RE resource centre at Diocesan House in Ely closed but many books have been stored at Stanton House in Huntingdon. Electronic resources have been provided at network meetings and training events. Termly newsletters inform teachers of the resources available. Whether schools are managing to keep abreast of new publications at a time of constricting budgets is unknown, but there is a move to create a new website for all schools including RE pages in September 2014.

Relevant Links

- Learn Together Cambridgeshire: Religious Education Advisory Service (Services & Charges and Courses & Training)
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/learntogether/homepage/31/religious_adviser
- Learn Together: The Cambridgeshire Education Portal (Religious Education and SACRE Resource Library)
www.learntogether.org.uk/services/CAS/Pages/RE.aspx
- Cambridgeshire County Council:
Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/279/children_and_families_working_with_partners/3

In the latest framework for Ofsted (September 2013), the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children has been raised. Training has been offered to schools on SMSC and the Agreed Syllabus reflects the importance of SMSC to all pupils, especially the contribution by Religious Education.

All schools and SACRE members received national information about various consultancies and surveys, and were encouraged to respond. These included the Non-Statutory Framework for Religious Education in England and Wales, A and AS-Level Consultations from the Department for Education, the impact of the E-Baccalaureate on the provision of Religious Education at Key Stage 4, teacher shortages in RE or provision for CPD for RE teachers, all of which are concerns to SACRE.

For support on the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus or for any new RE Co-ordinator, please contact <mailto:RE.SACRE@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk>

Formal Complaints

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

Collective Worship

SACRE has discussed the value and importance of Collective Worship in schools. We fully support its importance as it contributes to the ethos and social cohesion of a school. We recognise that Collective Worship can enhance the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.

Training has been offered to Governor Services on the importance of Collective Worship and its role to support evidence for SMSC of pupils across the school.

For a variety of reasons, the work on case studies of good practice in Cambridgeshire schools has been put on hold until the next academic year. A SACRE working party has been established with a brief to create support documents. A number of schools have offered to be case studies but it is noticeable how many of them are Church schools. SACRE are looking for more community schools to be willing to share their practice with others in the form of case studies. This will be a priority for SACRE in the forthcoming year.

Contribution of SACRE to Social and Racial Harmony Agenda

SACRE has endeavoured to have a breadth of people represented on SACRE to develop a broad and balanced curriculum for Religious Education and offer advice to schools through the local RE Adviser. This includes representatives from non-religious backgrounds.

SACRE supports endeavours like the Young Ambassador Scheme for RE (organised by the Religious Education Council) and the Anne Frank Trust, and are pleased to report that some Cambridge schools have young people that are ambassadors and who have been very active promoting RE in schools.

Links between SACRE, RE Ambassadors from St Bede's Inter-Church School, and Cambridgeshire Church Schools Together resulted in a whole-day training session for schools about the value of developing prayer spaces in schools.

Schools in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were involved in an international project, organised by The Woolf Institute and the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge. Held in March 2014, it related to issues around teaching of faith other than one's own. Best practices were shared between colleagues from the USA and the UK in order to create a toolkit that could provide CPD for others. This was highly successful. Networks have been established between schools within this country and in the United States. The aim is to provide a toolkit that can help teachers of Religious Education to develop a better understanding of religious literacy and support social cohesion.

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

Appendix

GCE AS, A Level and GCSE results for Religious Studies in Cambridgeshire schools: Summer 2014

A Level Religious Studies Cambridgeshire

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of candidate entries	72	76	85	41	63	64	62
Percentage of candidates obtaining A*-E grades	100%	100%	97.6%	97.5%	98.4%	98.4%	100%
Number of centres entering candidates	8	7	8	5	9	8	8
Percentage of candidates obtaining A*-E grades	100%	100%	97.6%	97.5%	98.4%	98.4%	100%
No of candidate entries nationally [^]	16,850	17,500	17,900	18,550	18,850	19,200	19,850
Percentage of candidates obtaining A*-E grades [^]	98.7%	98.8%	98.7%	98.9%	99%	99.1%	98.8%

[^] Note that the national figures include all subject entries in the 2013/14 academic year, not just those by pupils at the end of Key Stage 5.

Source. Cambridgeshire data: EPAS, December 2014; national data: DfE SFR 42/2014.

AS Level Religious Studies Cambridgeshire

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of candidate entries	84	79	53	29	57	22	27
Percentage of candidates obtaining A*-E grades	96.4%	87.3%	98%	79.3%	81.7%	95.5%	81.4%
Number of centres entering candidates	8	8	5	8	11	10	10
No of candidate entries nationally [^]	19,125	19,750	20,350	26,400	26,250	27,450	29,500
Percentage of candidates obtaining A-E grades [^]	91.7%	91.1%	91%	90.7%	91.5%	91.6%	91.1%

[^] Note that the national figures include all subject entries in the 2013/14 academic year, not just those by pupils at the end Of Key Stage 5.

Source. Cambridgeshire data: EPAS, December 2014; national data: DfE SFR 42/2014.

GCSE Religious Studies (full course) Cambridgeshire

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of candidates entries	937	1,158	1,212	1,388	1,561	1,730	1,644
% of the total cohort of Year 11 pupils in Cambridgeshire	15.4%	19.8%	19.9%	23.2%	26.5%	28.3%	27.7%
Percentage of candidates obtaining A*-C grades	83.1%	80.9%	79.3%	73.4%	75.7%	71.3%	74.6%
Number of centres entering candidates	23	25	23	21	27	27	26
No of candidate entries nationally	164,150	167,250	176,350	195,100	210,600	229,000	259,350
Percentage of national candidates obtaining A*-C grades	72.3%	73.3%	73.4%	73.8%	74.2%	73.6%	71.6%

Source. Cambridgeshire data: EPAS, December 2014; national data: DfE SFR 02/2015.

CSE Religious Studies (short course) Cambridgeshire

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of candidates entries	2,125	1,736	1,753	1,526	1,389	1,211	1,284
% of the total cohort of Year 11 pupils in Cambridgeshire	35%	29.6%	28.8%	25.5%	23.6%	19.8%	21.6%
Percentage of candidates obtaining A*-C grades	48.2%	49.1%	54.0%	45.2%	54.6%	46.0%	51.9%
Number of centres entering candidates	16	17	19	19	17	14	14
No of candidate entries nationally	249,650	237,950	228,450	199,050	176,850	158,050	Not Published
Percentage of national candidates obtaining A*-C grades	51.2%	51.4%	51.7%	50.6%	50.3%	49.9%	Not Published

Source. Cambridgeshire data: EPAS, December 2014; national data: DfE SFR 02/2015.