
WALSALL

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Annual Report

2019- 2020

Contents

Foreword	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Meetings	5
3. Membership	10
4. Religious Education	11
5. Collective Worship	13
6. Standards in Religious Education	13
7. School workforce data	13
8. SACRE discussion of National Developments in RE	14
9. RE Support in Walsall Schools	14
10. 2019/20 budget	15

Foreword

2019-20 has been another very successful year for Walsall SACRE. The Covid 19 pandemic resulted in one meeting being cancelled but the group can be very proud of what was achieved this year. As in previous years we are indebted to Re Today, and in particular Fiona Moss, who gives excellent value for money and ensures that our schools are well supported in their teaching of RE. We are also very grateful for the support of Walsall Council and our Clerk.

The excellent attendance at meetings noted in last year's report has continued and meetings have been both informative and enjoyable. We have benefitted from the educational expertise of a number of members. The meetings this year have been enhanced by presentations and we are very grateful to Helen Leadley from Blackwood Primary School, Haroon Ravat from Walsall for All, Mr. W. Green from Humanists UK and Alice Homer from Blue Coat C of E School for their contributions.

With support from RE Today we have reviewed and updated our constitution. The present Walsall Agreed Syllabus for RE, which has to be reviewed every 5 years, covers the years 2016-21. RE Today has given SACRE some initial thoughts regarding the new syllabus and this will form a key part of our work in 2020-21 and moving forward.

Dave Lomax

Chair of SACRE

1. Introduction

Since 1988, it has been a requirement that every local authority establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Though legislation sets out both the structure and the remit of a local SACRE - principally, overseeing religious education (RE) and collective worship - in practice every SACRE has developed its own particular style and character.

It is a legislative requirement that each SACRE produces an annual report of its work and that this is published, sent to the local authority, to NASACRE and to other interested parties such as the Department for Education. One important element of the report is performance data and an analysis of the extent to which schools are meeting their legal duties in relation to RE. More recently, other datasets have been made available by the DfE, most significantly the school workforce data that supports the monitoring of the level of provision in secondary schools. However due to the unique circumstances of the pandemic and the awarding of centre assessed grades to students this report will not include the usual focus on GCSE or other datasets as this would not be fair or equitable to schools or pupils.

2. Meetings

All meetings held at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall commencing at 6.00pm

The following SACRE meetings were held during the reporting period:

21st October 2019 and 16th March 2020. The summer meeting was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic and Government advice to suspend all but urgent decision making Council meetings until further review. SACRE resumed virtually in Autumn 2020.

Summarised Minutes from 2019/20 Academic Year

21st October 2019

Excellence in R.E. Programme

Fiona Moss arranged for local Primary School RE subject leader Ms Helen Leadley of Blackwood Primary School to present to SACRE. She provided an overview of the Excellence in R.E. change programme she had been part of, jointly funded by Walsall SACRE and R.E. Today. She emphasised how the Excellence in RE programme had enabled not only herself but also all of the attendees to delve further into developing effective learning by providing the tools to enable them to audit their teaching with regard to their own subject knowledge. The aim of the programme was to create R.E. Leaders capable of supporting and improving R.E. within their own schools but also within other primary schools throughout the borough.

Ms Leadley informed members that she had combined the practices she had learnt from the Excellence in RE programme and what she had learnt through sharing teaching practices with the other participants.

Stage One

The first task had been to audit the subject background within her respective school as well as her personal and colleague's knowledge.

Stage Two

To improve pupils understanding of stories through visual hooks, ie. jigsaws, models. She advised how children had researched mosques and made models for the classrooms.

Stage Three

Planning a visit to places of worship – aim to inspire the children's investigative skills, their understanding of other religions and enable pupils to show pride in their heritage by sharing experiences. She advised members how visits to places of worship had been the most challenging obstacle to overcome due to a number of issues:

- Funding – ever decreasing school funding and difficult for all parents to contribute.
- PPA timetable.
- Engaging with parents to volunteer to help with transport / walking with groups of children.
- Priority of other year group visits for time, money and volunteers.

As a temporary solution when visits had been unable to take place, guest speakers from places of worship had attended the school to speak with the children. The use of iPads had also enabled pupils to take 'virtual visits' to places of worship.

Ms Leadley emphasised how the Excellence in R.E. training and ongoing Network meetings had personally:

- Expanded her depth of understanding and personal subject knowledge.
- Provided regular professional development and ongoing support for all subject leaders.
- Enabled her to meet like-minded people.
- Ensured a creative and inspiring learning environment.

Ms Leadley reported that the course attendees had felt the training had enabled them to become specialists in their teaching of the subject and that they would continue to put all of the practices learnt into present and future teaching. Ms Leadley concluded by thanking SACRE for providing the funding to enable the course to take place and she once again emphasised how the Excellence in RE training had made a huge difference to all the participants and ultimately to their respective pupils.

Walsall for All Programme Update

Haroon Ravat, Integration Area Project Manager, Community, Equality and Cohesion introduced himself and gave a verbal presentation with regard to the Walsall for All programme. He informed SACRE that Walsall was one of five areas chosen to receive funding for an integration programme to work with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It was long-term strategy to create strong and integrated communities in Walsall with the aim of fostering greater community cohesion. He informed members that community cohesion work with young people had escalated and he provided details on a number of projects and initiatives for children and young people.

Walsall's School Linking Programme was one of a number of successful projects provided by Walsall for All. The remit of the programme was to foster tolerance and respect among young children and young people. Every school signed up to the programme would be 'twinning' with a school of dissimilar makeup with the anticipation of improving the understanding of faith across the participating schools. During 2018, Walsall for All piloted the programme with four primary and two secondary schools. Following on from the success of the pilot, the programme was extended to 22 primary schools and four secondary schools. He added that all of the schools involved with Walsall for All during the past twelve months had requested continued participation for a further year. Mr Ravat provided details of the schools included within the programme and a suggestion was made for the School Linking Programme to engage with special schools, which were sometimes isolated from mainstream activities.

There was discussion on whether Walsall for All and SACRE could work together with regard to linking the work they were doing to work in RE and the RE syllabus. Mr Ravat was optimistic about working with SACRE insofar as ensuring support offered would fit within the timescales and be compatible with the syllabus.

Constitution and Terms of Reference

SACRE worked on improving a draft constitution written by Fiona Moss, RE Today consultant. It was resolved that members would receive an updated Constitution and Terms of Reference for further consideration / approval. It was also agreed that a representative from Humanist UK be invited to a future meeting to provide an overview of their practice with a view to Members considering a Humanist UK representative on Walsall's SACRE.

National Updates

In particular, the new OFSTED framework emphasised the importance of a broader and more balanced curriculum including R.E. for all pupils in all school types. The first inspection reports under the new framework had been released and inspectors had indicated where improvements were needed in R.E. Ms Moss advised that she would monitor and provide SACRE with Ofsted inspection reports pertaining to Walsall schools when they become available.

School Workforce Data and Compliance in Walsall Secondary Schools

Ms Moss tabled a document, which contained data pertaining to religious education within Walsall's secondary schools. Ms Moss reminded members that it was compulsory to teach R.E. to all pupils regardless of whether a pupil has chosen the subject for GCSE or not. The only exception would be should a child's parents request withdrawal of their child from the subject. Ms Moss provided a breakdown of the data contained within the document, which included the percentage of time each school had spent teaching R.E. within KS3 and KS4 plus the percentage of pupils within each school who had taken the subject as a GCSE.

16th March 2020

Humanists UK

Mr. W. Green, member of Humanists UK gave a presentation to SACRE and provided an overview of Humanists UK. He stated that RE was the space in the curriculum where young people explored questions around identity, belief, values, meaning and purpose and it was essential the subject included non-religious as well as religious perspectives on the questions and themes it explored. He believed it was important for SACREs to include a humanist representative to offer support to guarantee inclusive RE in schools as part of the curriculum. Mr Green elaborated on some of the key characteristics of Humanism:

- they are atheist, non-theistic or agnostic and usually secular
- have a naturalist view and look to science to understand the world around us
- they can and should live good lives without religion or superstitious beliefs
- do not believe in life after death – this life is the only one we have
- in the UK the public face of Humanism is Humanists UK

- their decisions are based on available evidence and an assessment of the likely outcomes of our actions
- behaviour should be based on individual responsibility, co-operation and respect for others – ‘one should not treat others in ways that one would not like to be treated’, known as The Silver Rule.
- Make the best of the one life we have

A discussion then followed with regard to the presentation. Ms Moss, RE Today consultant informed the meeting that she served on a number of SACREs and it was evident that the RE subject had changed over the years. She stated it had become clear that it was important to include discussion around non-religious beliefs as many children and young people now fell into that category. Ms Moss reported that at in the last census for Walsall in 2011, out of 269,323 people who had been asked about religion, 53,876 people had indicated they had no religion (19.7%).

Mrs Leadley advised that as an RE teacher, there were many faiths to teach and schools should not ignore children with different sets of beliefs and should some children identify with a non-belief, they could compare and understand other people’s cultures/religions thus promoting discussion within a classroom. RE should be inclusive to all children whatever their beliefs. Others were supportive of the importance of teaching about non-religious worldviews.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Green for his informative presentation and advised that Walsall SACRE would consider whether to include a humanist representative on its membership.

RE at Blue Coat CE Academy

Mrs Alice Homer introduced herself and provided a presentation and overview in relation to her role as Head of RE and Sociology at Blue Coat CE Academy, which taught secondary pupils. She advised that her school had three full time specialist RE teachers, which enabled all pupils to study the subject.

Mrs Homer explained the Academy used a mixture of the Walsall Agreed Syllabus and Understanding Christianity from RE Today and that as a Church of England Academy, 50% of their RE curriculum had a Christian focus and 50% focussed on other faiths or beliefs.

Mrs Homer than provided the meeting with a breakdown for each term of the RE curriculum for the key stages within the school, which included examples of the pupils’ work. Mrs Homer advised that she would be prepared to offer advice to other secondary schools in relation to their RE teaching.

Constitution Update

A final version of the updated was presented which was accepted and Walsall SACRE agreed that

- i. Group C: Teacher representatives to include a mix of up to six teacher representatives from both primary and secondary schools;
- ii. That a representative from Humanists UK be invited to join Walsall’s SACRE as a Co-opted member.

Walsall Agreed Syllabus (2021 to 2026)

The RE Today Consultant left the room at this juncture of the meeting due to having a commercial interest. A small Agreed Syllabus Working Party be assigned to bring forward a variety of options for SACRE's consideration.

National and Local updates

A number of SACRE National Updates for Spring 2020 had been submitted by the RE Today Consultant to provide information relating to RE nationally.

Reports from OFSTED and SIAMS and data on RE being taught in all schools.

A discussion ensued with regard to RE education within all primary and secondary schools including Academies. Concern was raised in relation to the level of RE taught within Walsall's secondary schools. The Assistant Director - Access & Achievement advised that the local authority had a RAG rating system and would include RE in judgements going forward. Should any secondary school not be engaging in RE, a joint escalation from SACRE and the local authority will be undertaken.

Annual Report (2018 to 2019)

The draft Annual Report was submitted and approved.

Summer 2020

The summer meeting was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic and Government advice to suspend all but urgent decision making Council meetings until further review. Meeting resumed virtually in Autumn 2020.

Membership

The membership of Walsall SACRE at the end of the academic year 2019-20 was as follows:

<p>Committee A: Christian Denominations and Other Religions and Religious Denominations</p> <p>Mr G. Gomez - Roman Catholic (Archdiocese of Birmingham)</p> <p>Mrs. P. Mullins Roman Catholic (Archdiocese of Birmingham)</p> <p>Mrs M. Gibbons Methodist, Walsall</p> <p>Mrs V. Heydon-Matterface – Methodist, Brownhills & Willenhall</p> <p>Mr. D. Lomax - United Reformed Church</p> <p>Mrs. D. Letford - New Testament Church of God</p> <p>Mr. D. Thakker - Walsall Evangelical Churches</p> <p>Mrs. B. Groombridge - Walsall Quakers</p> <p>Mr. M. Sacha - Muslim Welfare Society</p> <p>Mr. M. Lad - Shree Ram Mandir (Walsall)</p> <p>Mr. S. Hussain - Pakistan Muslim Welfare Association</p> <p>Mr. I. Dangor - Anjuman-E-Isha'at-E-Islam</p> <p>Imam Saeed-Ur-Rahman - Mosque and Islamic Centre</p> <p>Mrs. A. Sharma - Hindu Faith</p> <p>Mr. M. Ashik Ali - Bangladesh Islamic Association</p> <p>Mr. M. Singh - Guru Nanak Gurdwara</p> <p>Mr. K. Mavi - Guru Nanak Sikh Temple</p> <p>Mr. S. Singh Rai - Walsall Sikh Forum</p> <p>Mr. G. Tsiappourdhi - Black Country Orthodox Trust</p> <p>Vacancies -</p> <p>Baptist churches</p> <p>Salvation Army</p> <p>Jewish</p>	<p>Committee B: Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education The Church of England</p> <p>Mr. P. Prasadam</p> <p>Mr. A. Orlik</p> <p>Ms. K. Donnellan</p>
<p>Committee C Teachers' Associations</p> <p>Mrs. Rebecca Broughton-Mills Association of Teachers and Lecturers</p> <p>Mrs. Ellen Taylor National Association of Head Teachers</p>	<p>Committee D Local Authority</p> <p>Councillor Ali</p> <p>Councillor Bashir</p> <p>Councillor Johal</p> <p>Councillor Mazhar</p> <p>Councillor Nasreen</p> <p>Councillor Rasab</p> <p>Councillor Singh Sohal</p>
<p>Also invited – Mrs F Moss</p>	<p>Mrs Bev Mycock (Clerk)</p> <p>Mrs S. Kelly (LA Representative)</p>

3. Religious Education

The locally agreed syllabus

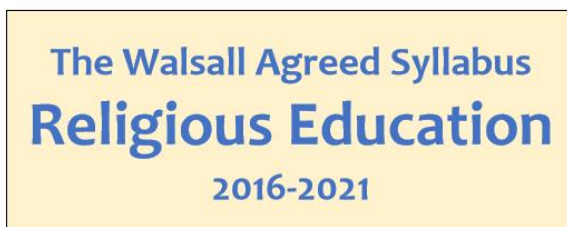
- a. For historical reasons, Religious education (RE) is not part of the National Curriculum but is a local responsibility. It is for this reason that legislation requires that each local authority (LA) produces an Agreed Syllabus for RE. Legislation also requires that an Agreed Syllabus be reviewed every five years.
- b. During the reporting period, SACRE supported schools as they continued to work with the new syllabus and consider any adaptations to RE curricula in the light of the learning from the new OFSTED framework for inspection. The feedback received from schools, especially from primary schools, is that they continue to appreciate the clarity of the materials and the guide to planning the new OFSTED framework means that some alterations may be welcome when the syllabus is reviewed to bring materials into line with current and the newly changed emphasis. Subject knowledge for teachers is essential especially with the real focus on knowledge, understanding and retention of knowledge in the new OFSTED framework. They note the thoughts around the science of learning and the importance of understanding diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews and hope that the new or revised syllabus will take that into account.
- c. Primary teachers receive on average 0-3 hours of training about RE in their initial teacher training and the majority receive no training each year in teaching the subject. This means it is a subject that NQTs and others need support to deliver.
- d. A hard copy of the Agreed Syllabus was given or sent to all schools in Walsall at the syllabus launch on the 6th June 2016. An electronic copy of the syllabus was also given to all schools. The syllabus will be reviewed in academic year 2019/20. You will note that a working party was set up in the SACRE meeting in March 2020
- e. The syllabus is accompanied by a full set of 27 support units of work for Primary schools. These units were placed onto a disc and shared with all Walsall Primary schools. Two sample units were also shared with secondary schools. Schools have found these useful to support planning but are aware that these are not statutory units to be slavishly followed rather to use as a treasury to support planning for their own school and classes.
- f. Each term Fiona Moss from RE Today runs a NATRE affiliated RE network meeting in an afternoon between 1-3pm. She is also available before and after these meetings for 1:1 meetings with subject leaders and teachers. She also provides support by phone and email. From the summer term 2020 these meetings became virtual due to the pandemic.

These Termly meetings provided a regular input of professional support and development for those who attend (a mixture of subject leaders, senior leaders, teachers and Teaching assistants) and those in their own to school to whom they disseminate learning. Termly briefing and training sessions also continue to support non-specialist TAs, HLTAs and teachers in primary schools to increase their confidence leading, managing and teaching RE.

During the year 2019-20 sessions were provided on ***Inspirational RE, Knowledge in RE and Teaching about the Hindu Religious Tradition in the Primary School***

These sessions were relatively well attended but due to loss of admin support in the local authority Fiona Moss provides the admin support for these. It is pleasing that the Local authority share details of these meetings through bulletins and other communication channels with schools.

- g. Delivery of RE by Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs), with teachers taking this time as their Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time, continues in Primary schools. Several HLTAs still regularly attend the termly network meetings. We continue to hear that some primary schools are reporting that although RE had been taught by HLTAs this subject is now taught by class teachers. We hope that tis will continue and hope to capture some quantitative information on this next academic year when reviewing the syllabus.
- h. There were no formal complaints to SACRE about RE during the year



Aliza, 14: 'Open minds look at all religions'

4. Acts of Collective Worship

No school requested a determination during this period.

There were no complaints received about Collective Worship during this period.

SACRE offered no advice concerning Collective Worship during this period.

5. Standards in Religious Education

As there have been no examinations in 2020 and will be none in 2021 it has been agreed nationally that there will be no sharing of data from individual schools.

SACRE hope that this will not mean that when we are able to interrogate data again this does not mean that there will be fewer students taking this important subject at examination level. RE still has to be taught to all pupils until they leave school whether or not they opt for it as an examination.

SACRE are continuing to collect information from local secondary schools through the local advisers to ensure that they are compliant with the law and are offering religious education for all students. If schools that are academies are choosing not to follow an agreed syllabus they must still teach RE to all their pupils. SACRE continues to work with the local authority to find out how RE is being taught in schools who are not entering the majority of their cohort for GCSE.

We were pleased to note that new OFSTED framework has made it even clearer that RE must be taught in all school types to pupils in both KS3 and KS4 even if they have not opted to take a qualification in Religious Studies.

SACRE is also internally using the information from the School workforce survey that NATRE sourced from the DfE but will not be publishing commentary on this. However, SACRE would like to congratulate students who, in extreme circumstances, achieved grades reflecting their hard work at both GCSE and A level. SACRE would also like to thank teachers who have supported students and taught them in extremely difficult circumstances.

6. School Workforce Data

As it has been agreed nationally that there will be no sharing of data from individual schools SACRE have decided not to share the school workforce data that secondary schools submit to the DfE as this would only provide a partial picture. SACRE continue to look at all suitable data within their meetings and work with the LA to provide appropriate support and challenge to all schools around provision of and standards in RE.

7. SACRE discussion of National Developments in RE

National Association of SACREs (NASACRE): Walsall SACRE is pleased to continue to be part of this association. The NASACRE newsletters provided useful information to inform agendas and support for schools.

NATRE: Members were concerned to read of the decline in the levels of provision of RE in England measured by the school workforce and GCSE data. They continue to work with schools in Walsall on this issue.

The Commission on RE: SACRE continue to keep up with any changes in RE as a result of this report and ongoing research and development. Members continue to focus on:

- Ideas around a national entitlement for RE which they will need to take into account in the next Agreed Syllabus
- The need to hold schools to account for the provision and quality of RE
- The legal status of right of withdrawal and the challenges of selective withdrawal
- Diversity of religions and worldviews

8. RE Support in Walsall Schools

During the reporting period the Adviser provided support to schools in the following areas:

- Subject Knowledge
- Provision of RE during lockdown
- Remote learning in RE
- Withdrawal from religious education
- Suitable places of worship to visit virtually
- Virtual visitors
- Agreed Syllabus
- Network meetings and individual requests for support or guidance.

9. 2019/20 Budget

The Local Authority reported that the budget was £5,000 per annum and that this would be spent primarily on meeting costs, Primary network meetings and professional advice to SACRE and Walsall schools provided by the Adviser.

Clerk to SACRE

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