

Council – 13 November, 2017

Notice of motion – SACRE

A notice of motion has been received from Councillors Barker, Robertson and Craddock as detailed below:

Council notes that the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) analysis reveals that the results of a survey shows that 25% of all secondary schools failed to provide a weekly Religious Education (RE) lesson. This percentage rose to 34% for 11 to 13 year olds and 44 % of 14 to 16 year old in academies and free schools. This survey took evidence from over 790 secondary schools.

Council acknowledges the high importance of RE in promoting a cohesive society. A Community Cohesion Strategy is being developed here in Walsall, that will, amongst other objectives, equip pupils with the vital knowledge about different faiths and beliefs in community, public and world affairs and so resolves to:

- (1) support the actions of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) here in Walsall in researching the level of RE provision particularly KS4, in Walsall secondary schools.
- (2) join with Walsall SACRE to write to the Secretary of State for education to urge that Central Government will instruct OFSTED to also check on curriculum provision to ensure that schools comply to provide a legal amount of RE.
- (3) write to all secondary schools here in Walsall to remind them of their legal obligation to provide RE under the 1998 school standards and framework act.

Position Statement

The motion reflects on an issue, which has been identified nationally, about the delivery of R.E in key stages three and four.

The landscape in Walsall is complicated because of the landscape of Academies, Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools.

Academies do not need to follow the National Curriculum. Their funding agreements set out their curriculum requirements. However, all pupils in academies must study RE in every school year including Years 10 and 11.

In maintained schools, R.E. is a statutory part of the curriculum . Maintained schools should follow the locally agreed syllabus. The exception to this is Faith schools can develop their own R.E. syllabus

It is not compulsory for schools or colleges to teach R.E. at Key Stage 5.

There is a strong tradition in Walsall of schools and academies cooperating with each other and with the Local Authority to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.

SACRE has focussed on disseminating good practice e.g. through the arrangement of a termly meeting for primary practitioners on good practice and the delivery of the locally agreed syllabus. Three years ago a meeting was held for secondary R.E Coordinators to look at British values and R.E. It has been more difficult to facilitate a continuation of R.E. teachers from this phase coming together.

At the moment SACRE does not hold information about the level of provision of RE in Key Stages three and Four.

In terms of OFSTED and their work, it says in the latest handbook produced in 2017 that they will look at:

- the design, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum, ensuring breadth and balance and its impact on pupils' outcomes and their personal, development, behaviour and welfare
- In other references the handbooks says-
- The broad and balanced curriculum inspires pupils to learn. The range of subjects and courses helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of their education, including the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, within this, the promotion of fundamental British values, are at the heart of the school's work.

In this way it would appear that OFSTED has a broad curriculum remit in terms of looking at the balance of the curriculum in general.

SACRE

The Walsall Standing Agreed Council for Religious Education (SACRE) is a statutory body which meets on a termly basis.

What does SACRE stand for?

SACRE stands for Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Since 1988, all Local Education Authorities/Local Authorities have been required to have a SACRE and it is now the Children's Services Division of each Local Authority (LA) that is responsible for making sure there is a SACRE.

What does a SACRE do?

The law says that Religious Education (RE) must be taught in all schools and a SACRE's role is to advise its local authority on what needs to be done to improve RE and collective worship for schools in its area. This is because RE, unlike other areas of the curriculum, is a local responsibility. Through the SACRE, local communities have the opportunity to influence directly what pupils learn in RE.

How is the membership of a SACRE decided?

The structure of the SACRE is defined by law. There are four groups or committees, as below:

1. The Christian denominations and other religions and their denominations, reflecting the principal religious traditions of the area.
2. The Church of England.
3. Teacher and Head teacher associations.
4. The Local Authority

What are a SACRE's duties?

The SACRE's main function is to advise the local authority on matters related to the religious education which follows the locally agreed syllabus, and on collective worship in schools.

The SACRE:

- Can require the LA to review its locally agreed syllabus;
- Must consider applications from a headteacher that the school be released from the requirement for collective worship to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (this is known as a determination);
- Must publish an annual report of its work.

What is a locally agreed syllabus?

The locally agreed syllabus is the statutory document for RE in the local authority. It sets out what should be taught to pupils in all key stages and the standards expected of them at the end of each key stage. It is produced by an agreed syllabus conference (ASC).

The agreed syllabus has to be reviewed every five years. A review was completed recently and the outcome was Walsall's Agreed Syllabus 2016-21. This new Agreed Syllabus was launched at an event at the Forest Arts Centre and was well received by schools/academies.

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