
WALSALL

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

2020- 2021

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Foreword

2020-21 has been, despite the problems caused the pandemic, has been another successful year for Walsall SACRE. All meetings have been online and, while in person is always better, attendance has continued to be very good from all representative groups. All members have contributed to the meetings and we have had some interesting discussions. As in previous years we are indebted to RE Today, and in particular Fiona Moss, for ensuring that are schools are well supported in their teaching of RE. We are also very grateful to the support from Walsall Council and their staff.

The agendas for meetings have been varied including presentations from a variety of people. Members who are teachers led a session on collective worship. We received feedback on responses to a letter sent to all schools. It was particularly pleasing that we had responses from both primary and secondary schools.

The success story of the year was the establishment and launch of the new Walsall Agreed Syllabus for RE. This covers the years 2021 to 2026. We are grateful to Walsall Council for providing extra funding, the small working group who liaised with RE Today and Fiona and Lat who produced the impressive document. The syllabus was launched with over 80 primary and secondary teachers attending a day of presentations and workshops.

Moving forward into 2022 I hope we can fill the vacancies on the group, work with the councils Community, Equality and Cohesion team and continue to help our schools develop their RE curriculum.

Dave Lomax Chair Walsall SACRE

Overview of the work of SACRE

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.

SACRE met on three occasions during the academic year 2020/21. Due to the ongoing COVID- 19 Pandemic all of these meetings have been held online using Microsoft Teams. The management, access to and broadcast of these meetings has been in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings)(England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and meetings have been conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution. This has resulted in an increase in the number of members of SACRE able to attend these digital meetings, and has also enabled members of the public to view the meetings on YouTube.

All of the meeting in 2020-21 were quorate with members of each of the four constituent groups in attendance. Detailed information on the attendance at meetings can be found in Appendix ??

The Agendas and minutes for these meetings are available on the Walsall Council website.

(<https://cmispublic.walsall.gov.uk/cmis/Home.aspx>)

A brief overview of each meeting can be found below

Monday 12th October 2020

OFSTED reports on Walsall schools and the monitoring of RE

The RE Adviser contracted to work with SACRE shared a document with SACRE outlining comments from reports. She shared the situation regarding OFSTED inspections during the pandemic who have recently appointed a number of HMI Curriculum Experts to help improve the subject knowledge of its inspection teams under its new framework. The HMI Curriculum Expert appointed for religious education was Mr. Richard Kueh.

There was extensive discussion about the inconsistent teaching of RE within some secondary schools and the fact that this had been discussed many times in SACRE before. The need was emphasised to continue strong community cohesion with the teaching of RE in both primary and secondary schools and that SACRE needed to ensure that this happened. It was agreed that any issues in with RE in academy schools would be raised by the local authority with the Regional Schools Commissioner and with the Trusts directly.

Following further discussions, it was agreed that the RE consultant would draft a letter in consultation with the Chair on behalf of SACRE, to send to all secondary schools with regard to their RE curriculum with a request for the schools to respond. The responses would be included as an item at the next meeting of SACRE.

Members requested that a representative from Walsall For All be invited to the next SACRE meeting to discuss primary and secondary RE education and community cohesion and whether there would be the potential for any funding.

There are difficulties in monitoring the teaching of RE in Walsall due to only having a very small number of days of adviser time. In normal times standards within secondary schools were easier to monitor due to the availability of examination data. SACRE should also consider supporting primary schools further and monitoring their RE provision in the future.

Plans for GCSEs and A levels, and the non- public sharing of school level results were discussed and it was noted this would change some of the information available for SACRE in its monitoring role and information in the annual report.

Local and national updates

Documents were presented to share information and opportunities for schools, teachers, SACRE members and the organisations they represented.

It was requested that the local authority shared relevant items directly with schools.

There was further discussion around inter-faith week opportunities, examination arrangements and results and arrangements for pupils fasting during primary and secondary fasting periods.

The one-year increase in secondary RE trainees was discussed and schools were asked to provide training placements where possible. The Director of Access and Inclusion reiterated that Walsall Council had a duty to ensure all schools taught the full curriculum.

A series of resources freely available to schools were discussed. These included NATRE Anti-racist RE resources, further home learning RE resources and socially distanced RE resources from NATRE. The LA were asked to tell schools about these resources. A member of SACRE spoke highly of the resources and their use in her school.

The primary network continues virtually.

Monday 8th March 2021

Walsall for All

The Integration Area Project Manager, Mr Haroon Ravat from the Community Equality and Cohesion Team provided a verbal presentation to SACRE. Mr Ravat talked about how school links had been doubled from 12-24 schools and had been praised for its work with the art gallery and football club. Covid-19 had meant a reduction in the work with schools but 10 schools are to continue.

Mr Ravat advised members that the Walsall For All programme would formally finish at the end of March but its principles and working practices would continue through the Community, Equality and Cohesion Team. The Council had recognised that the ethos of the work of Walsall For All needed to continue to build a stronger, more united, cohesive town and to develop opportunities for all ages.

Discussion continued around the presence of RE in the programme offer and the use of the agreed syllabus and linking work to RE that teachers are expected to do in schools.

There was discussion around the importance of setting up a database of contacts for schools of visits to places of worship and visitors. Mr Ravat committed to making their extensive database of contacts into a format that could be shared with schools.

SACRE asked that a member of the community cohesion team might join SACRE.

Membership update

Report presented around new members attending and others who had been or were to be approached.

Secondary Schools RE Feedback

The report of the Quality Assurance Team Manager was submitted. Mr Perks, presented the report to inform SACRE of the feedback received from secondary schools and academies with regard to their provision for RE, as requested at its meeting of 12 October 2020. He reported that only four responses to the RE questionnaire had been received, as detailed within the report.

The RE adviser highlighted the follow up steps to be taken.
It was agreed that an online questionnaire would be sent out.

The RE Consultant suggested that secondary head teachers be reminded of the legal obligation with regard to the teaching of RE within all schools at one of their future Head teacher meetings.

SACRE Annual Report

The report was discussed and approved. The clerk was asked to send it to NASACRE and DfE.

School Workforce Data - Autumn 2020

Verbal update on the School Workforce Data, Autumn 2020 provided by the DfE to NATRE.

Within the school Workforce Data:

- 4 schools had no KS4 entries for RE
- 3 schools had reported to DfE they had no teaching of RE
- 2 schools had reported less than 2% of RE teaching

With regard to Primary Data, Ms Moss alluded to the previous meeting of SACRE when members had requested a primary school survey be carried out with regard to the teaching of RE. The questions within the primary school survey included:-

- Who taught RE within the school;
- Comment on how it was being taught;
- How much curriculum time was committed to the teaching of RE;
- Amount spent on resources;
- Whether RE was taught daily or weekly.

The RE Today Consultant reported that following a discussion with the Quality Assurance Team Manager, an on-line questionnaire would be prepared for completion by primary schools and data collated and reported back.

Walsall Agreed Syllabus 2021 to 2026

The RE Today Consultant, Ms Moss, reported that the Agreed Syllabus Working Group had met twice. She reported that the Local Authority had agreed for RE Today to update the present agreed syllabus to create the Agreed Syllabus 2021-2026.
A questionnaire had been forwarded to all schools. Feedback had been very positive and this would be collated. Further details of the syllabus were discussed.

National updates

Various updates were discussed and the LA agreed to share items in the schools bulletin.

Collective Worship

After a discussion on the role of SACRE and collective worship, it was resolved to hear about Collective worship from two schools at the next meeting.

Monday 5th July 2021

Appointment of Chair and vice chair

Mr D Lomax was appointed Chair and Mrs Patti Lane was appointed Vice Chair.

COVID 19 and schools update

Measures in school were discussed, as was the current position with OFSTED visits into schools.

Collective Worship

Presentations on Collective worship were heard from two schools; Mrs H. Leadley, Blackwood School and St Anne's Primary School, and Mr A. Orlik, Blue Coat C of E Infant and Junior Schools' Federation.

There was discussion on the role of collective worship and members from both religious and non-religious organisations expressed their appreciation about what was represented.

Walsall Agreed Syllabus

The Chair introduced the item by thanking the members of the working group and Ms F. Moss and Mr L. Blaylock for their work in producing the new agreed syllabus, which it was proposed was to be implemented in community and voluntary controlled schools, as well as free schools and academies.

Ms Moss provided background information and summarised the production of the new agreed syllabus, which was a local responsibility for each SACRE and was undertaken every five years. It was noted that in reviewing the current agreed syllabus, a 'light-touch' review had been undertaken by the working group and that there had been liaison with teachers throughout the process. The presentation of the syllabus to this meeting was to seek the approval of SACRE acting as ASC and then as SACRE.

Approval was granted unanimously by all four groups.

The next step is for it to be considered by the Cabinet with a view to recommending the Council to approve its implementation in Walsall Schools.

New agreed syllabus launch and support

The launch of the new agreed syllabus, planned for 2 November 2021, was discussed. Whether this would be a physical event or carried out virtually was to be determined but both print and electronic versions of the syllabus would be available (the latter being uploaded to the Council website's SACRE page). Some units of work required 'refreshing' and enquiries to obtain funding for this were ongoing. The work to provide support to schools would continue, with network meetings being arranged on a regular basis.

National updates

There was discussion on the following items of the tabled updates:

- Ofsted research review
- National RE updates for SACREs, summer 2021
- NASACRE conference 2021 summary

Overview of the Agreed Syllabus conference 2020-21

The whole SACRE formed the ASC to start the review process 2020-21. The ASC consisted of the whole body of SACRE. They chose members of SACRE representing a variety of groups including teacher members to form a working group to work with the consultants to complete a light touch revision of the syllabus.

During the process, the working group were presented with drafts at several points during the writing process and were able to input advice and suggestions. Schools were surveyed online and also invited to the consultation meetings during the process.

The decision was made to recommend to the ASC and SACRE that the revised Walsall Syllabus for September 2021-September 2026 be approved and shared with Walsall's schools. The revised syllabus was considered by and it received approval from the Cabinet of Walsall Council.

The revised Agreed Syllabus for Walsall was due for launch to all schools in the Borough during early Autumn 2021.

Section 2: Religious Education

RE in schools

Evidence from teachers attending virtual termly briefing meetings and the RE Consultant's virtual visits to and conversations with schools suggested that:

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. The primary networks and syllabus support units provide some support for NQTs but there was concern that there were no RE subject specific sessions on RE available for NQTs

Whilst many primary schools were able to offer RE as part of home learning, some schools struggled and focused on other subjects, such as English and Maths and pupil well-being.

Many schools resumed their 'normal' timetable in September 2020; others adapted and created a recovery curriculum. Some of these recovery curriculums included RE and others focused more heavily on other subjects. Schools were regularly reminded that, legally, RE must be taught to all pupils in all year groups (unless withdrawn by their parents). Most schools fulfilled their legal duty.

Schools continued to teach RE using the Locally Agreed Syllabus and were pleased to be consulted extensively about the review of the syllabus.

It was pleasing to hear reports directly from schools in SACRE meetings.

The Locally Agreed Syllabus

Teachers are continuing to work with the Agreed Syllabus launched in Summer 2016 but are pleased to hear that the syllabus is being refreshed and revised. They hope the new syllabus will offer more support and clarity around knowledge and progression and reflect the requirements in the OFSTED EIF and the OFSTED research review for RE.

Subject leaders, heads of RE, teachers and senior leaders were consulted over options for the new agreed syllabus for September 2021-September 2026. Consultations were done through survey monkey, online meetings and in regular network meetings. The results of these were fed back to the working group.

The new syllabus was due for launch in October 2021.

SACRE has failed to find funding to refresh the support units of work.

Training is planned to continue into the year 21-22 in termly primary network meetings.

The academic year 2021-22 is an implementation year and schools are gradually bringing in the new syllabus with schools expected to have it in place by September 2022.

Standards and monitoring of RE

Ensuring that sufficient time is given to RE is an ongoing difficulty for some schools, although there are reports that the new OFSTED inspection framework and RE research review is bringing a renewed focus on RE in schools where RE was struggling to get sufficient curriculum time.

Normally SACRE is able to monitor the standards in schools by reviewing GCSE and A level results. Due to the fact that no examinations were held in 2021, it has been agreed nationally that no individual school data will be shared. SACRE is therefore unable to make comment on the examination of RE. 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.

OFSTED reports also provide a way of monitoring RE. As inspections have been suspended for much of this year this has not provided the view into RE in Walsall that we usually get. We will be pleased to consider evidence from OFSTED reports in future years.

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.

We have sent out a letter and survey to Secondary schools and have had fruitful conversations with several schools to ensure they are aware of the law around the provision of RE to all pupils in all year groups (unless withdrawn by their parents). 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.

Teacher training materials and advice for schools

Termly briefings provided a regular input of professional support and development for those who attend subject leaders, class teachers and HLTAs delivering RE and those in their own school to whom they disseminate learning.

These briefings remained virtual in 2020-21. There continued to be a higher attendance than at face-to-face meetings. When all this over it may be worth considering a mixed delivery model.

Termly network meetings 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.

This year termly networks have taken place on teaching using diverse stories and texts in RE, anti-racist RE and diversity in religion and worldviews. The number of teachers attending has slightly increased with attendance peaking at over 25 for some sessions.

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.

These Termly networks 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 school to whom they disseminate learning. These meeting have moved to 4-6pm as supply is very difficult to get in current Covid times. The RE adviser 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.

Information on resources for home learning in RE was sent out to schools via the Head teachers' bulletin.

The current agreed syllabus has a full set of 27 support units written for use in Primary schools. These units were placed onto a disc and shared with all Walsall Primary schools in 2016. 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.

A NATRE affiliated local group also runs in the city.

Other information

There were no formal complaints to SACRE about RE during the year.

Advice given to the Local Authority

Advice was given to the local authority around the necessity to review the current RE agreed syllabus and to ensure that schools were aware of what would be in place for September 2021-2026.

Section 3: Collective worship

Standards and monitoring of Collective Worship

The SACRE has found it hard to monitor collective worship over the past few years. It is noted that schools found different ways of delivering collective worship virtually during the last difficult year. Two SACRE meetings this year included a discussion on collective worship, and SACRE members were pleased to receive presentations from two schools on collective worship and discussions of how these schools had managed their collective worship during the pandemic.

Determinations

No determinations have been requested in the year 2020-21.

Teacher training provided

No training on Collective worship has been provided in 2020-21.

Other information

There were no formal complaints to SACRE about collective worship during the year.

Advice to the Local Authority

No advice was given to the local authority around the provision of collective worship.

Section 4: Links with other bodies

National Bodies

Walsall SACRE are pleased to be linked with national bodies and receive useful national updates from Fiona Moss our RE adviser.

Reports from NATRE, including the School Workforce Data have proved useful to SACRE when monitoring schools. Further resources, such as those for home learning, from NATRE have been shared with schools.

Information from the REC has been used in meetings and shared with schools where appropriate.

The OFSTED research review for RE provided good guidance and discussion for SACRE and this was shared with schools.

Local bodies

Lichfield Diocese provide excellent support to SACRE and we are pleased to have a member of the diocese as vice chair.

SACRE tried hard to further links with Walsall for all and heard from the Integration Area Project Manager, Mr Haroon Ravat from the Community Equality and Cohesion Team.

Section 5: SACRE involvement in the Local Area

Governor and head teacher links

Information has been shared to head teacher briefings.

Advice on community issues

The RE adviser regularly gives advice on speakers coming into schools and visits to places of worship locally. As can be seen in the digest of the minutes, it is hoped that in the winding down of the Walsall for all project up to date contacts for places of worship can be shared with schools.

David/Nick- can we add something further local here???

Section 6: Managing the SACRE and partnership with the Local Authority (LA)

Professional and administrative support

The Local Authority provided funding to support SACRE activity 2020 -21 by contracting with RE Today Services of an RE Consultant for up to 5 days during the year. These days include servicing SACRE, working with schools, providing primary networks training and first response consultancy.

A small amount of further funding was used to conduct a light touch syllabus review.

Fiona Moss from RE Today continued in the role of RE consultant.

Fiona Moss
RE Today Services
Imperial Court
Sovereign Road
Birmingham
B30 3FH

During this year, Bev Mycock left the employment of the Local Authority. In the interim, and pending the recruitment of her replacement, the clerking of SACRE was temporarily undertaken by Dr Paul Fantom. The clerking services are provided by:

Legal and Democratic Services.
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Council House
Lichfield Street
Walsall, WS1 1TW

Nick Perks from the Local Authority's Children's Services Directorate holds responsibility for supporting SACRE and attends its meetings.

Nick Perks
Children's Services Quality Assurance Team
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
The Civic Centre
Walsall
WS1 1TP

Membership

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020/21 three meetings of SACRE took place. These meetings were held on 12 October 2020, 8 March and 5 July 2021, and these were conducted digitally via Microsoft Teams and all of them were quorate.

The table provided in Appendix A demonstrates the diverse composition of Walsall's SACRE, but it does also show that during this challenging time a number of membership vacancies have arisen and for which it will be necessary to undertake recruitment in due course.

Training

Some members of SACRE have attended training provided by the RE Adviser to primary teachers.

Finance

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.

Appendix A: Membership

The membership of Walsall SACRE at the end of the academic year 2020-21 was as follows:

<p>Committee A: Christian Denominations and Other Religions and Religious Denominations</p> <p>Mr G. Gomez - Roman Catholic (Archdiocese of Birmingham) Mrs. P. Mullins Roman Catholic (Archdiocese of Birmingham) Mrs M. Gibbons Methodist, Walsall Mrs V. Heydon-Matterface – Methodist, Brownhills & Willenhall Mr. D. Lomax - United Reformed Church Mrs. D. Letford - New Testament Church of God Mrs. B. Groombridge - Walsall Quakers Mr. M. Sacha - Muslim Welfare Society Mr. M. Lad - Shree Ram Mandir (Walsall) until October 2020 then replaced by Mr K. Bhatt. Mr. S. Hussain - Pakistan Muslim Welfare Association Mr. Y. Sudat - Anjuman-E-Isha’at-E-Islam Imam Saeed-Ur-Rahman - Mosque and Islamic Centre Mr. M. Ashik Ali - Bangladesh Islamic Association Mr. M. Singh - Guru Nanak Gurdwara Mr. K. Mavi - Guru Nanak Sikh Temple Mr. S. Singh Rai - Walsall Sikh Forum Mr. G. Tsiappourdhi - Black Country Orthodox Trust</p> <p>Vacancies - Baptist churches Salvation Army Hindu Faith Buddhist Faith</p>	<p>Committee B: Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education The Church of England</p> <p>Mrs P. Lane Mr. A. Orlik Ms. K. Donnellan Mrs R. Graham</p>
<p>Committee C Teachers’ Associations</p> <p>Mr G. Headley National Union of Teachers Mrs. Rebecca Broughton-Mills Association of Teachers and Lecturers Mrs. Ellen Taylor National Association of Head Teachers</p> <p>Vacancies Association of School and College, National Association of School Masters and Union of Women Teachers or NEU, VOICE. Ms H. Leadley, Blackwood Primary School</p>	<p>Committee D Local Authority</p> <p>Councillor A. Hussain Councillor K. Hussain Councillor S. Johal Councillor S. Nasreen Councillor K. Pedley Councillor I. Robertson Councillor G. Singh-Sohal</p>
<p>Also invited – Mrs F Moss</p>	<p>Democratic Services Team, Walsall MBC, to provide clerking service to the meetings of SACRE Mr N. Perks, Children’s Services, Walsall MBC</p>

Appendix B: SACRE Constitution

Needs inserting

Appendix C: Circulation of the Annual report

The Walsall Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Annual Report will be:

- Provided, via e-mail, to all SACRE Members
- Provided, via e-mail, to the Department for Education
- Provided, via e-mail, to NASACRE
- Published on the Local Authority website