

SACRE Integration Briefing Note

Walsall Council were part of the Governments pilot integration programme which one of the factors considered was that Walsall Schools were the 12th most segregated in the country.

This really was a reflection of the borough, which has wards with a very diverse residents base and wards, which are predominantly white British residents who, through consultation in 2017 were found to be resistant to mix.

One of the key influencers in promoting integration are faith-based organisations, schools and places of worship.

Through Walsall For All it was established that dialogue between communities was a very effective method of promoting integration, building friendship and rectifying uninformed views to a more accurate experience and belief. Key to the approach were the Faith and Belief Forum who are a national organisation developing community dialogue sessions. A model that can be replicated through schools using a issue based approach.

Another successful project was School Linking, which pairs two schools of often-different demographics or religious beliefs to work with one another through an exchange model of visits and learning. This impacts not only the students but also teachers and parents as they explore differences in cultural norms, which can include localised ward based cultures.

When considering the 2040 consultation currently been undertaken faith is having a downward trend, which has witnessed significant reduction in attendance at worship across religions. <https://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/read-watch-listen/uk%E2%80%99s-changing-faith-and-belief-landscape-exploring-religious-diversity>

Predictions of around 60% of the population would self-classify as having no faith by 2040 and society and schools will need to consider this downward trend in religious belief.– the risk to schools and society considering predictions for white British may be the lack of purpose and identity

There is a clear split from an ethnic minority and white British perspective. 60% of white British identify as having no faith while 80% of non-white British identify as having a faith. This should be considered from a SACRE perspective especially considering the basis of the original SACRE legislation based on Christian values.

There are concerns when considering the predictions around those who have a religious belief and those who do not. This may raise tensions and suspicion from those without a belief of those with a belief, which may extend along racial lines. The reverse may also happen with those with a religious belief and those who do not, again along race lines, with white British been deemed non-believers and not answerable to God

There is no uniformed approach to faith across the borough, and often links between schools and places of worship were facilitated by the place of worship approaching the schools on a locality based perspective. Children Services have stated they have no intention of leading on school linking

Faith visits are facilitated by a number of voluntary groups but this is on an ad hoc basis with no formalised approach. A previous approach to formalise multi faith visits by schools was not successful.

Nigel Rowe

Integration Lead

Nigel.rowe@walsall.gov.uk