



SACRE BRIEFING

Issue: 14

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Welcome from the Chair

It is good that we are beginning to have more of a dialogue with some of our member SACREs, thereby celebrating successes and enabling us as an organisation to reflect your views. For example, I was delighted to read about fantastic work going on in Nottinghamshire SACRE, where they are linking with children from 10 primary schools to consider "British Values,

human values: investigating what matters” at the National Holocaust Centre. This is exactly the sort of collaboration that all SACREs should be looking for opportunities to develop, and it would be great to hear what SACRE is doing, so please drop me an [email](#) or send a tweet @NASACRE and let us know about what your SACRE is doing.

Congratulations to Brent and the other commended SACREs for their ACCORD inclusivity awards, which Paul Pettinger writes more for SACREs. You can read this report on our website from [this link](#).

Good luck to those SACREs who have submitted an application for one of the NASACRE Westhill awards, the closing date for which was 31 March.

The focus of much of NASACRE’s work this coming term is the AGM and Conference in York on 16 May: ***Preparing for life in Britain today: the contribution of RE***. You can read more of the details below, but it promises to be as informative and thought-provoking as always, as we think about the contribution of RE to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain.

The ***Religions are not Monoliths*** conference, held jointly with AREIAC in March, went well; evaluations were excellent and it is hoped that the collaboration with AREIAC will continue and other similar joint events will take place in the future. Summaries of the presentations by the two keynote speakers, [Dr Abdullah Trevathan](#) and [Bob Reiss](#), have been prepared by Dilwyn Hunt.

We believe these are valuable opportunities to develop expertise and hope to be able to provide more opportunities in the future.

NASACRE Constitution and Executive Vacancies

We have now closed the vote on the new constitution. All 42 responding SACREs agreed to the new constitution and so we consider that was passed unanimously by all SACREs. What this means is that, at our AGM we will be looking for some new members for the Executive Committee. These are voluntary unpaid roles, with travel expenses being paid. Your Executive usually meets in London, once each term, from 11.00-15.30 on a weekday. Much of our work is done electronically.

We have a pressing need for a Vice-Chair (having been without one for almost a year). This role is a six-year commitment, as the Vice-Chair becomes Chair after two years and then has a two-year tenure as Executive Assistant. The Vice-Chair supports the chair in representing NASACRE at meetings with various bodies such as the REC, and the DfE and giving direction to the work of the Executive.

We have four other Executive Committee vacancies. We are looking for people who, as well as having a good knowledge of the SACRE system, have skills in some specific areas. These are:

- Editing the SACRE Briefings – so someone with attention to detail and able to remind me of deadlines!
- Some knowledge of websites – we have technical support so an in-depth knowledge of HTML or CSS is not required, but a logical mind and an eye for style and detail is.
- Financial awareness – someone who can handle spreadsheets, invoicing and balance sheets.
- Conference organising – essentially able to project manage and liaise between venues, the Exec, speakers and others.

We do have people who are currently filling all these roles on the Executive committee, so it would be a case of shadowing an 'experienced hand' and taking over a role gradually. Officially these roles are for a three-year term of office (which can be renewed) and are defined in the Constitution as:

- 5.2 A Membership Secretary who shall monitor the membership, keep up-to-date records and work with the Treasurer to ensure members have paid their fees on time
- 5.3 A Communications Officer who shall have oversight of the Association's communications strategy and communications, including the NASACRE briefings sent to member SACRE
- 5.4 A Conference Organiser who shall have oversight of the Annual Conference in partnership with the Secretary and the Treasurer
- 5.5 A Development Officer who shall oversee the production of a development plan and report to the Executive and Council on its progress

Please find nomination papers on the [website](#)

The BIG NASACRE Survey

There has been a steady flow of responses to the [Big NASACRE Survey](#) – thank you to those who have responded so far. We appreciate the time and effort that member SACREs are taking to help us better represent your views at a national level. If your SACRE has not yet responded, then please do so before the deadline of 30 April, even if you can only answer some of the questions.

We realise that the survey is quite detailed, but at this time it is more important than ever that we are able to represent you from a position of knowledge. The data will take some time to analyse, especially as we have given space for individual views, but it is hoped to have a few 'headlines' at least by the time of the AGM, and for a fuller publication later in the year.

The Commission on RE

You will have noticed that the online survey has now closed and the first live evidence-gathering session has occurred. It is our understanding that there will be further live evidence-gathering sessions which SACREs may be invited or volunteer to attend by [emailing](#) the Commission's project manager, Jon Reynolds. The first of these is in [Birmingham on the 4th May](#).

Evidence can still be submitted via the [Commission website](#).

In an [item below](#), Rudolph Elliott Lockhart provides more information about the Commission and its desire for information from SACREs.

APPG RE

The All Party Parliamentary Group for RE (APPG RE) held its latest session recently entitled *Mainstreaming Religious Literacy*. The speakers were:

- Professor John Wolffe, Department of Religious Studies at the Open University
- Professor Joshua Hordern, Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at the University of Oxford, Oxford Healthcare Values Partnership
- Kamran Malik, Senior Partner at Ernst and Young, working with Coexist House

All three spoke about the vital role of teachers (not just RE teachers) to promote good religious literacy as a way to change how religion is viewed by (social) media

and society. It was most surprising to hear how Ernst and Young value religious understanding.

Our Chair, Paul Smalley, represented NASACRE at the meeting with a further four executive members present, representing other interests but with a definite eye on ensuring members were aware of SACREs and their work. Paul suggested that Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards could be tweaked to ensure all teachers have a commitment to promoting Religious Literacy. This was warmly welcomed by all present in the room, and Chair of the APPGRE, Fiona Bruce MP, promised to raise this with ministers.

NASACRE Conference and AGM 2017

Preparing for life in Britain today: the contribution of RE

Bookings are coming in steadily for our **NASACRE Conference and AGM 2017** on 16 May at the York Hilton, 1 Tower Street, York, YO1 9WD.

£100 per delegate from NASACRE member SACREs

£125 per delegate from non-member SACREs and interested others

Kosher meals should be booked and cannot be guaranteed after 28 April.

SACRE Clerks should book on behalf of their delegates - please check your Clerk has done so. Fire regulations at the venue mean we have to monitor numbers carefully and keep to the stated number of attendees.

Bookings: [**Conference and AGM 2017**](#)

Booking deadline: 9 May

Driving and parking are greatly discouraged in York city centre, but there are a limited number of parking places available at the hotel at £12 per day and £19 for 24 hours for overnight guests.

Castle Car Park is opposite the Hilton at £2.40 per hour; Park & Ride at £2.70 return.

For those who may wish to stay overnight on Monday 15 May, we have negotiated a guaranteed reduced rate at the Hilton. A limited number of places, which may be cancelled up to 24 hours before, are available:

£105 - room only

£115 - bed and breakfast single room

£125 - bed and breakfast double room

Book [online](#) or ring 01904 464712 (Mary) or 01904 464722 (Andy) during weekday business hours.

Other hotel booking websites may offer lower rates for the Hilton, but these may be advance purchase and non-refundable and prices are often room only.

NASACRE and the Inter Faith Network (UK)

NASACRE is in membership with the IFN in the Educational and Academic Bodies section. Members in this category, which includes WASACRE, meet at least once a year ([click here](#) for details). NASACRE also has the opportunity to take part in the consultations undertaken by the IFN and to inform and shape its policies towards education and Religious Education.

Part of IFN (UK)'s remit is to promote a better understanding of RE and its website publications under the heading EDUCATION, includes a page on RE across the UK, what expected of different sorts of schools and a page on understanding SACREs. In this way IFN is attempting to [promote better religious literacy](#).

IFN has a wealth of publications. Three in the last year have sections for schools and are worth being aware of:

- The Inter Faith Week Toolkit
- Inter Faith Learning, Dialogue and Cooperation: Next Steps
- Let's Talk: Practical Pointers for Inter Faith Dialogue

All three are free to [download](#).

Michael Metcalf has helpfully produced some reflections for NASACRE members on the IFN, NASACRE and what we can learn from their respective histories. More especially he looks to the future with a real sense of optimism at what NASACRE,

SACREs and IFN can achieve in partnership. His paper can be found by following [this link](#).

Teachers of RE and Humanities asked to complete survey on RE provision

The REC and NATRE have invited all secondary teachers of RE and Humanities in England and Wales to complete the *State of the Nation* survey, to let them know about the level of RE provision in schools. Their aim is to use the results of the survey to produce an accurate report on how all 4,500 state-funded secondary schools in England and Wales are making provision for religious education.

Schools have been sent a formal request via email for the required information, including a link to the survey, with a reminder in March, but a further reminder from SACREs would be helpful.

The results will create a snapshot picture of compliance across the country that will highlight examples of best practice and innovation that can be shared, as well as identify under-performing areas where additional future support can be targeted. The data collected online during the spring will be collated and critically assessed, with the findings published during the summer term.

Please forward the [survey](#) to teachers of RE, Humanities and SLT and encourage them to complete it.

The Great Get Together

On 22 February, the Jo Cox Foundation launched The Great Get Together to commemorate the murder of the MP as a way of bringing communities together to build better community cohesion. The event, which will take place over the weekend of 17 -18 June 2017 has its own [website](#) where events can be registered.

An issue for many schools is that this event falls during the month of Ramadan for Muslims. Hence, schools that want to participate in the event ought to think carefully about how the issue of - secondary - pupils fasting would exclude them from such events, especially as Jo Cox was seen as a [champion of the rights of Muslims in her constituency](#).

SACREs wishing to give advice to schools on **The Great Get Together** should consult their appointed Muslim members to see how Muslim communities are planning to be involved in this event, if at all.

Where Muslim communities are involved in **The Great Get Together** they will, on the whole, be integrating this into interfaith iftars, but not necessarily joining with those of others where this would compromise the fast.

The Commission on RE

Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, CEO of the RE Council

The [Commission on Religious Education](#) (CoRE), established in mid-2016, is picking up momentum. After a very positive response to the call for evidence with over 2,000 people responding, CoRE is exploring additional ways to hear from stakeholders in RE. Commissioners have now met for a second residential meeting and are considering a wide range of evidence on which to base their interim report. This is a substantial project with the potential to create some of the most exciting developments in religious education for decades. [14 commissioners](#) with a wide range of expertise and experience have been appointed to review the legal, education, and policy frameworks for RE. The Government is watching with interest, waiting to hear what the commissioners will recommend.

This is a vitally important time for RE: academisation has put the SACRE system under substantial pressure, and CoRE offers a way to make recommendations that could transform the situation and ensure that RE has strong foundations. It is therefore critically important that everyone with an interest in RE should feel able to engage with CoRE. It is particularly important for the commissioners to hear from SACREs and from people working with SACREs. As the bodies with a statutory role overseeing religious education, SACREs have a crucial role to play in any discussion over the future legal, educational and policy frameworks for the subject.

There are many ways to get in touch with CoRE. Some SACREs have already sent evidence to CoRE as a result of the online call for evidence that CoRE ran from December 2016 to February 2017. It is still possible to [submit evidence via the CoRE website](#). It is also possible to give evidence orally at one of a series of public evidence-gathering sessions. We have already run one session in London,

but there will be further sessions in Birmingham, Manchester, Exeter, Durham, as well as a second London session (the dates for these sessions will shortly be announced: check the CoRE website and [twitter feed](#) for updates). To get a flavour of the public evidence session, you can read an [account of the first session by one of the commissioners here](#), along with links to some of the presentations. If you would like to give evidence at any of the upcoming sessions please get in touch with CoRE's project manager on enquiries@commissiononre.org.uk.

The commissioners are also keen to learn more by getting out and about, meeting and talking with as many people working in RE as possible. If you'd like to invite a commissioner to a SACRE meeting, or to attend an event your SACRE is running, please [get in touch](#).

An interim report from CoRE will be published later on this year, after which there will be a further consultation where again, a range of views from SACREs will be vital. The final report is due out in mid-2018.

For CoRE to be a success it will need to build on the wisdom within the RE community. CoRE needs to hear about what works (and what doesn't) on a local level.

The Commission on RE is therefore the chance for every SACRE to explain what is necessary to secure a strong future for RE.

Religion or belief: dress codes and religious symbols

In March, the European Court of Justice advised the Belgian government that companies, and in this case G4S, could have a policy that forbade the wearing of religious symbols in the work place. The Court recognized that companies had a right to project a neutral image and that they were within their rights to have policies which upheld that right. This was not deemed to be discriminatory. The advice can be used by judges in EU member states to inform decisions that they make where it has alleged discrimination has taken place, direct or indirect.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has stated: 'Following a ruling from the Court of Justice of the European Union, employers can ban staff from wearing visible religious symbols, but must have a relevant policy in place before

doing so.'

The latest advice can be found [here](#).

Religious dress and schools

The Department for Education, based on case law here, is quite clear that schools in England can determine their own dress codes and that they should do this in consultation with parents. It is not expected that this will change. What may be affected is the right of staff to wear religious dress in school, where a school wished to project a 'neutral' image.

SACREs and the ruling

SACREs may be asked for advice on this matter, especially where there are no interfaith groups that might be consulted. SACREs are advised to look closely at the Equality and Human Rights Commission website for the latest advice from them.

The ruling and Brexit

It is not clear what will happen to such a ruling when the UK leaves the EU in just under two years. The European Court of Justice is an EU institution, as opposed to the European Court of Human Rights which is a Council of Europe Institution, and there will be some adjustment made in terms of its impact on UK law when the UK leaves the EU.

Items for your Summer SACRE Meeting

- **Check** your NASACRE membership status for 2016-17 and if necessary arrange payment of membership fee.
- Decide who will be attending the AGM and Conference on 16 May... and ensure your clerk books them onto the conference!
- Consider seriously whether your SACRE could nominate a member to serve on the NASACRE Executive.
- If not already completed, discuss and respond to **The BIG NASACRE Survey**. You may decide to hold an additional/extraordinary meeting for this, before 30 April.
- Consider if there is any evidence your SACRE could send to the Commission on RE. Encourage individuals to respond.
- Consider if your SACRE has any training needs that might be met by

using the NASACRE resources on the website.

- Ensure that your **Annual Report** is completed and sent to the DfE and NASACRE.
- Email **chair@nasacre.org.uk** with details of any events you are holding during this term and next.



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