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National Association of  
Standing Advisory Councils  
on Religious Education

## **SACRE BRIEFING**

**Issue: 16**

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### **Welcome from the Chair**

Welcome to another busy academic year! March 2018 will see NASACRE

celebrate its Silver Jubilee! We are hoping to mark the year in some exciting ways, and the **Jubilee Conference and AGM on 24th May** in London should be a really special occasion. Put the date in your diary now; we will send out further detailed information about venue, speakers and programme soon.

The big RE news of this term is likely to be the publication of the **Commission on RE's Interim Report** *Religious Education for All*. NASACRE has been engaged with the Commission and the responses to the **Big NASACRE Survey** helped us to do that as you will see from the numerous references in the report. You will also see in the report, reference to our **AGM Discussions Summary report**, a collation of the detailed anecdotal evidence provided by the delegates of 51 SACREs who contributed at the conference. This report provided a rich qualitative landscape of concrete examples that went to further strengthen the case presented by our Big Survey. SACREs will be particularly interested in the Commission's appeal for 'views' on 'A renewed and expanded role for SACRES' on pages 13-14 which are covered in more detail in paragraphs 182-214. My response to the Report can be seen **here**.

Can SACREs who respond to the next round of consultation (outlined in paragraph 272) also keep NASACRE informed of their response. We want to hear your views so we can represent you nationally.

You may also have seen the REC/NATRE '**State of the Nation' RE Report** published earlier in September, which paints quite a worrying picture of the state of RE in England at the moment.

I have met recently with other policymakers at a Theos sponsored 'think tank' which is aiming to build consensus on the future of RE, and soon I will be meeting with the chairs of the other Professional RE Groups to ensure that whatever the recommendations, SACREs have a central role in the future of RE.

I have been reminding policymakers that:

- *All SACREs would like to do more to support, guide and advise schools.*
- *SACREs need fair and proper funding, and reasonable provision of specialist help and advice to enable this to happen.*
- *The creation of a Locally Agreed Syllabus is enabling for teachers and others involved and leads to high quality RE.*
- *There should be consequences for schools that are not providing good RE; either SACREs need to be given power to hold schools to account or Ofsted need to rigorously inspect and report on RE provision in all schools.*

I have also been arguing that we need more specialist RE teachers, and that Primary ITE should have a minimum number of hours to focus on RE. I have continued to suggest that Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards (Professional and Personal Conduct) could be amended to include a requirement that all teachers should promote religious literacy. This would force ITE providers and school leaders to pay attention to religious literacy training for their staff and students.

Do please keep us informed of what you are doing as a SACRE, your plans for future events, good news stories and new Agreed Syllabus launches. Tweet us @NASACRE

### **National statements about RE**

The DfE published its response to the consultation over the EBacc in July. Many had hoped that RE might be included in an expanded list of EBacc subjects. This did not happen, but in paragraph 72, there was a re-affirmation of the statutory nature of RE in all maintained schools:

*72. We have considered suggestions to include additional subjects or pillars within the EBacc but have decided that this could reduce pupil choice at GCSE to the point where no other subjects can be studied. Religious education must be taught to all pupils until the end of key stage 5, a qualification (such as GCSE religious studies) should be offered at the end of key stage 4 to accredit pupils' knowledge and understanding. The proportion of pupils in state funded mainstream schools entering a GCSE in religious studies remains high at 47% in 2015/16.*

SACREs may wish to examine their Agreed Syllabus and ensure that it has sufficient provision for pupils at the latter key stages. One option might be for the AS to state "all pupils must" follow an accredited course. If your AS suggests that all pupils should follow such a course, does it adequately outline a syllabus for those who do not? Would it help to communicate the message from the DfE to your schools to help start a new dialogue about KS4 provision and compliance?

The Schools Minister has also made some helpful comments in written answers to Parliament recently. The statutory duty for LAs to 'establish' and 'support' a SACRE, was reaffirmed by Nick Gibb in a written answer to Parliament in July 2017:

*Local authorities have a statutory duty to support the activities of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and publish an agreed*

*syllabus for maintained schools without a religious designation in their local area. Maintained schools with a religious designation and academies are not required to follow the agreed syllabus, although it can act as a useful benchmark for their curriculum planning.*

SACRE membership must include representatives of the area's principal faith groups, teachers and from the local authority. This contributes to securing the confidence of local communities and enables the SACRE to take account of the circumstances of each area in creating an agreed syllabus that has regard to local context.

The Government does not have any current plans to remove the duty on local authorities to establish SACREs and include RE in the National Curriculum.

In November 2016 Nick Gibb also stated:

*Local authorities currently receive funding through the Education Services Grant to support **Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs)** to develop an agreed syllabus for **religious education (RE)**. Local authorities will continue to receive funding to develop an agreed syllabus for RE, once the Education Services Grant has been removed.*

There is therefore no reason for an LA to not properly support SACREs; it is a statutory requirement for which they are funded by central government. Failure to do so could lead to a legal challenge in the courts, or serious sanctions from the DfE.

If your SACRE is finding that your Authority is seeking to reduce the support that it gives, please let NASACRE know so that we can support you.

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## **The Westhill/NASACRE Awards 2017-18 - further info and new instructions for next year**

Over the last twelve years, the Westhill/NASACRE Awards have successfully given SACREs opportunities to enhance their capacity to generate high quality experiences in RE (or collective worship) for their schools.

NASACRE is now encouraging and inviting individual SACREs (or SACREs in

partnership) to apply for a Westhill/NASACRE Award for 2018-19. Awards of up to £4,000 may be applied for via the **application form** on our website.

Projects should offer pupils at school opportunities to engage in compelling learning experiences in RE (or collective worship), within the broad theme of "education into diversity".

Any SACRE wishing to submit an application is strongly advised to look at the **briefing notes** which accompany the application form at the website location.

For queries, advice or further information, please contact **Michael Metcalf**, the convenor of the Awards Panel. **Closing date: 31st March 2018**

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## Annual Subscription increase early warning

Please note that NASACRE's Executive Committee will bring the following resolution to our AGM in May 2018:

*That the Annual Subscription to NASACRE should be raised from £95 per year to £105 per year with immediate effect (i.e. for the academic year 2018-19 and onwards).*

This is a very modest increase, given that it is the first increase for perhaps ten years or more. The Executive Committee believes that the increase is justified because of increases in the costs of its core activities over the years, including administrative support, travel and subsistence, consultancy fees, and membership of/partnership with other (related) bodies, including the costs of representing NASACRE on these bodies and/or participating in their programmes. The true cost would be a great deal higher were NASACRE not sustained by the voluntary contributions of time, energy and expertise generously given by its officers and committee members! So the Annual Subscription is great value for money, and we should not be shy of saying this.

Procedurally, the mechanisms for dealing with this motion will be circulated with the communications and papers for the AGM itself. However, SACREs might well discuss and vote on the above resolution in advance of the AGM. It is anticipated that ways will be found for SACREs to record their vote, for or against the resolution, whether they attend the AGM or not. In order to keep the procedure as clear and simple as possible, no amendments to the resolution will be taken, either before or during the AGM.

**Rev. Prebendary Michael Metcalf, Treasurer**

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## **The Commission on RE: The Interim Report - What might it mean for pupils, teachers, advisers & SACREs?**

**The Interim Report** came out in late September as indicated earlier in this briefing. We know that the Commissioners were pleased to have had many positive contributions from SACREs up, down and across the country.

In order to debate the content, and hopefully influence the final report, NASACRE are once again holding a joint conference with AREIAC at the Ibis Hotel, Birmingham on 24th November 2017.

The conference will seek answers to many vital questions regarding the **Commission on RE: The Interim Report** including what its recommendations might mean for pupils, teachers, advisers & SACREs.

The Conference provides space to consider:

- What are the key issues the CoRE Interim Report identifies?
- What does the Report say about the evidence that has been presented so far?
- Does the Report comment on the nature or quality of the evidence that the Commission has received?
- Is the Commission still looking for additional evidence?
- In the light of the Interim Report what questions would you wish to put to the Commission?

This conference will be of great interest to all SACRE members, RE advisers, RE teachers and anyone interested in the future of RE.

Further details are on the **flier**.

### **Cost:**

AREIAC members and members of a SACRE subscribed to NASACRE: £75.00

Non-members: £90.00.

Refreshments and lunch will be provided.

To reserve a place for the Conference on Friday 24th Nov 2017 please use this **online form**.

We hope to see you there for what should be an interesting day – book soon!

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## RE in Pupil Referral Units

You will clearly all know the statutory status of RE is that it should be provided for all pupils in all maintained schools. However, you may be surprised to discover that there is no statutory duty for a PRU to deliver RE. Local authorities maintain PRUs but Section 20 of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998 says that:

*Schools maintained by local education authorities on or after the appointed day shall be divided into the following categories—'*

- (a) community schools;*
- (b) foundation schools;*
- (c) voluntary schools, comprising—(i)voluntary aided schools, and (ii)voluntary controlled schools;*
- (d) community special schools; and*
- (e) foundation special schools.*

It then says in subsection of section 20:

*In this section "school" means a primary, secondary or special school, including a nursery school which is a special school but excluding—*

- (a) a nursery school which is not a special school; and*
- (b) a pupil referral unit.*

There are also 'Alternative Provision Academies' but the DfE is not aware of any AP Academy funding agreements that include a requirement to provide religious education.

NASACRE continues to have dialogue with the DfE and would be interested to hear from SACREs if they have considered the impact of this in their LA.

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## Safeguarding and visits to places of worship

Every school is required to have an Educational Visits Coordinator to comply with safeguarding demands. As Local Authorities are focused on health and safety as well as safeguarding, it is likely that as schools implement more stringent requirements, they will become more demanding about the health and safety and safeguarding expectations of the places they wish to visit.

It is therefore possible that schools may ask faith leaders whose venues they wish to visit, for sight of their Health and Safety policies and risk assessments.

Any building open to the public will have a Public Liability Insurance Certificate that will have required the completion of a risk assessment; most venues also have their own Health and Safety policy, all of which cover their internal programme of events. However, once they know what schools need to know, they may need to adapt their existing risk assessments to cater for external groups visiting their venues.

SACREs may therefore wish to ensure that the local places of worship hosting visits from schools have some training to raise awareness as to how schools will need help to plan their visits, and the questions they may be asking in advance.

**Denise Chaplin**

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## **Inter Faith Week 2017**

SACRE Clerks will recall the Inter Faith Network emailed in August asking them to pass on a letter to schools at the beginning of the new term, inviting them to become involved in Inter Faith Week 2017.

This year the Week starts on Remembrance Sunday, 12 November, and ends the following Sunday, the 19th. SACREs have had an important role in promoting Inter Faith Week since it started in 2009 and in 2016 more than 12% of all events involved schools or SACREs, with a further 7% Local Authorities.

For details about the Week the best place to look is the **Inter Faith Week website** which contains a rich bank of resources for those wishing to hold events. NASACRE, a member body of IFN, encourages SACREs to host events for Inter Faith Week every year.

The theme of Remembrance might be one that SACREs would wish to engage with, especially as many local authorities and communities will be commemorating the lives of those lost in conflict since WW1 during this time. Examples of how Remembrance was marked during Inter Faith Week 2016 can be found in the **report** published by IFN earlier this year.

A resource that SACRE may find use can be found **here**.

If your SACRE decides to hold an event please remember to register it in the events



section on the **website**.

**David Hampshire, Assistant Director  
Inter Faith Network for the UK**

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## **SACRE items for your Autumn Term meeting**

- Check the invoicing arrangements for your **NASACRE membership**. If your LA payment methods have changed please check that payment has taken place. You can now track your status for 2017-18 on the database.
- Once we have your membership subscription, you will receive the new log-in details for the protected part of the NASACRE Website. Please arrange for your SACRE members to have this information but do not share with anyone else.
- Consider whether your SACRE has any training needs that might be met by using the NASACRE resources on the website.
- Ensure that your **Annual Report** has been completed and sent to the DfE and NASACRE.
- Take note of the 'State of the Nation' report and CoRE Interim report's recommendations and implications, and discuss them, feeding back your comments to both the Commission and NASACRE.
- Book a place for one of your SACRE members at the **joint AREIAC/NASACRE Conference** in Birmingham.
- Consider what your AS states about Key Stages 4 and 5 in the light of the National Statements above.
- Email **chair@nasacre.org.uk** with details of any events you are holding during this term and next.



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