

**Cambridgeshire
Standing Advisory Council
on Religious Education
(SACRE)**



**Annual Report
2014 - 2015**

Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education: Annual Report 2014 - 2015

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Chairman's Introduction from Tony Orgee

The past year has been busy for the Cambridgeshire SACRE as it promotes good standards in RE and advises the Local Authority about matters connected with collective worship and religious education in accordance with the Local Agreed Syllabus.

The Cambridgeshire SACRE is very aware that religious education can make an important contribution to a range of activities that help our young people understand and respect the various faith traditions. The previous year saw the launch of the new Local Agreed Syllabus and this year has seen further work to support teachers in its delivery.

The Cambridgeshire SACRE brings together faith representatives, teachers and councillors, and I would like to thank all members for the way in which they have worked constructively together throughout the year.

I wish to place on record the debt of gratitude that the Cambridgeshire SACRE owes to Sue Ward, the RE Adviser for Cambridgeshire, for all her excellent advice, support and guidance over the past year and also for the INSET work she delivers across the county to support the Local Agreed Syllabus. I would also like to thank Steph Boothroyd for her invaluable administrative support throughout the year.

The meetings of the Cambridgeshire SACRE are open public meetings and agendas are published on the County Council's website in advance of the meetings. We are pleased to welcome members of the public who would like to attend our meetings.

**Councillor Tony Orgee
Chair, Cambridgeshire SACRE**

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The Purpose of the Report

Religious Education is an important curriculum subject. It is important in its own right and also makes a unique contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils and supports wider community cohesion. The Government is keen to ensure all pupils receive high-quality Religious Education.

The Education Act 1996, Section 391 (6) and (7) requires that each year the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) from each Local Authority will publish a report as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by the representative groups on the Council during the last preceding year.

This entails:

- advising the Local Authority on Religious Education given in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus;
- monitoring the provision and quality of Religious Education taught according to its Agreed Syllabus, together with the overall effectiveness of the syllabus;
- providing advice and support on the effective teaching of Religious Education in accordance with the locally Agreed Syllabus;
- providing advice to the Local Authority and its schools on methods of teaching, the choice of teaching material and the provision of teacher training;
- in partnership with its Local Authority, considering whether any changes need to be made in the Agreed Syllabus or in the support offered to schools in the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus, to improve the quality of teaching and learning of RE;
- offering advice to the Local Authority, and through the Local Authority to schools, concerning how an existing Agreed Syllabus can be interpreted so as to fit in with a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum.

Management of SACRE

The Local Authority has continued to support the work of SACRE through funding that provides a clerk for the meetings, services of an RE Adviser to support SACRE, its work and teacher training for the teaching of Religious Education, and advice about Collective Worship. Despite significant cutbacks in many Local Authorities, Cambridgeshire County Council has continued to support SACRE and its work.

During the past year it was good for SACRE to see the Agreed Syllabus being referenced and embedded within schools. SACRE continues its work to encourage schools and share practices at the network meetings. The core materials of the syllabus continued to be

developed and in October 2014 the third and final scheme of work disc was distributed to schools.

This year there has been considerable confusion in schools over how to assess and report on progress in RE. Schools have often assumed that the removal of levels from National Curriculum subjects would also apply to RE, and have therefore in many cases been using the Agreed Syllabus but not the assessment part of it. The data that SACRE has been able to gather has been patchy therefore, and it is difficult to draw conclusions with regard to progress at KS1, KS2 and KS3 other than the conclusion that work needs to be done both to raise teacher confidence in assessing progress, and to revise the Agreed Syllabus so that the assessment system is more in line with National Curriculum subjects.

A concern for SACRE's ability to report on progress in the future is that if schools all use their own assessment systems as for foundation subjects, it will be difficult to standardise these for the purpose of analysis and comparison. This is a development area for SACRE in the next academic year.

SACRE sought legal advice from the Local Authority and created and implemented its constitution. This is now on the SACRE website and is publicly available.

Every Local Authority has to convene a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Cambridgeshire SACRE, which has met three times this year, comprises four statutory groups. Attendance at meetings has been variable. Most notably, there has been a decline in regular attendance by non-Christian faith representation. This year the SACRE moved meetings from morning to afternoon to help increase attendance by making meetings more accessible. We continue to ensure the membership reflects the demographic.

The four groups that make up SACRE are as follows:

- Committee A - representatives of non-Anglican Christian denominations, other religions, and world-view communities;
- Committee B - representatives of the Church of England;
- Committee C - representatives of the teachers' associations;
- Committee D – representatives of the Local Authority.

We said farewell to Andrew Dyson (Church of Jesus Christ of LDS representative). There continues to be a vacancy for a Sikh representative and an NUT union representative.

Details of the agenda items, attendance at the meetings and minutes of the meetings can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council SACRE website at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/279/children_and_families_working_with_partners/3.

Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education

Ofsted Reports

A member of SACRE has for two terms monitored RE by reading Ofsted Reports in Cambridgeshire. Generally the picture for RE reflects the overall picture and grading for a school. Mostly, the reports do not make specific reference to RE but report on social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The reports recently have reflected a positive picture of provision for SMSC and British values.

Secondary Schools

Monitoring Secondary RE Provision

Academies bring new challenges in terms of accountability – however, the SACRE Adviser has continued to run training in academies to embed the Agreed Syllabus.

Secondary network meetings supported by SACRE have continued to happen once a term: SACRE is grateful to Cottenham Village College for agreeing to host these meetings. A small but resilient group of teachers from 7 secondary schools have met to share concerns such as the provision of statutory RE at KS3 and KS4; new GCSE and A-Level requirements; Ofsted and the intersection between RE and ‘British Values’.

Areas for Development

As secondary schools are required to ensure that eventually 90% of their students study ‘English baccalaureate’ subjects, SACRE is concerned at the omission of RE from the official list of humanities, and will therefore endeavour to closely monitor consistency of RE entitlement in secondary schools.

Subject Strengths and Weaknesses

- **A-Level Entries:**

The number of centres entering candidates has increased, as has the total number of entries. This is in line with national figures, as is the 98.9% pass rate. Last year we expressed concern at the gap between Cambridgeshire students’ 43.5% grades A*-B and the national figure of 51.7%: it is reassuring to see that this gap is closing, with Cambridgeshire students achieving 50.7% grades A8-B against a national figure of 54.5%.

- **AS-Level Entries:**

There has been a significant rise in entries, outstripping the national by a considerable margin (nationally, entries at AS level have increased by 3%, while in Cambridgeshire

they have increased by 385%! It will be interesting to see what happens when the AS becomes uncoupled from the A level, from 2017 onwards,

- **GCSE Full-Course Entries:**

While entries have declined nationally – by 10% - in Cambridgeshire they have increased by 27.5%. Given that last year this relationship was reversed, and taken in conjunction with the rise in AS entries, this is a very pleasing bounce in students' engagement with RE. The percentage of students gaining A*-C grade is also very slightly higher than the national percentage, so all in all this is a very encouraging outcome.

- **GCSE Short-Course Entries:**

While short course entries have declined this year, the decline is not as steep as the national one: nationally entries are down by 24%, while in Cambridgeshire they are only down by 4%. It is worth repeating the comment in last year's annual report, that *it would appear that many schools still see the value of a short-course in Religious Education as it validates the statutory requirement for RE at this Key Stage*. In 2014 the entries for both full and short-course represented only 49.3% of the total cohort for Year 11 pupils; this year 57% of the cohort was entered, which is a definite improvement. However, the question remains, 'What provision is being made for the statutory entitlement for Religious Education for the other 43% of the cohort in the county?'

Primary Schools

Monitoring Primary RE Provision

As mentioned above, there has been considerable confusion in schools over how to assess and report on progress in RE. The data that SACRE has been able to gather has been patchy therefore, and it is difficult to draw conclusions with regard to progress at KS1, KS2 and KS3 other than the conclusion that work needs to be done both to raise teacher confidence in assessing progress

Joint working between the Diocesan and the Local Authority Adviser has meant that four primary school network meetings per term have been held across the county to ensure some access to professional development for teachers of Religious Education. SACRE is grateful to all the schools that offer to host the meetings. These were attended by over 100 teachers. This was a unique opportunity for subject leaders to come together to share good practice and begin to increase subject knowledge regarding different religions. Feedback from these meetings shows that interest in Religious Education, of teachers and pupils alike, has improved. The enquiry-based learning pedagogical approach is inspiring teachers.

Overall there were 26 training courses arranged for schools focusing on areas such as how to lead RE, assessing RE and linking RE to the new National Curriculum. These courses were

attended by over 200 delegates across the county. The high attendance suggests that schools are eager to maintain and enrich their RE provision, and to identify and share good practice.

In October 2014 the SACRE Clerk contacted all schools requesting the name and email address of the RE co-ordinator so that they could be added to a distribution list. It is important that the RE co-ordinator's details are regularly updated so that SACRE can ensure that any support or advice that can improve the quality of RE is targeted at the right person.

Special Schools

Two teachers from special schools have attended the training events. Attendance by special school teachers at training courses and network meetings is low and SACRE would like to target special school teachers and seek the best way to support them in the role that they provide.

Support for Improving the Teaching of the Local Agreed Syllabus

Consultancies

In the academic year 2014-2015, the SACRE adviser made consultancy visits to 19 primary schools and one secondary school, at their request, to carry out work on the following range of topics:

- Assessment in RE
- Monitoring and Evaluating SMSC
- SMSC Across the Curriculum
- Planning for Effective RE teaching
- Embedding & Planning for the new RE Syllabus
- What makes an effective enquiry based question in RE
- Planning RE with HLTAs
- 'Wow Moments' in RE
- The Importance of RE in the Curriculum
- Stories in RE
- Renewal of the RE Quality Mark

She also delivered training on SMSC to governors and NQTs at centrally arranged events.

NASACRE & AGM Conference

Two members of SACRE attended the NASACRE 2015 Conference and AGM held on 21st May 2015 in Birmingham. The keynote speaker was the Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, 2002-4 and now Visiting Professor, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia. He spoke with considerable authority and knowledge about the place of RE and collective worship in modern education and the publication of a paper jointly with Linda Woodhead called 'A

New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools'. This paper has been studied by SACRE members and has formed the basis for debate here in Cambridgeshire.

Lord Nash's Letter

In January 2015 Lord Nash wrote a letter to all SACREs which highlighted the importance of a SACRE and the support that they provide to improving the 'academic rigour' of RE in schools. The letter also emphasised the tensions within Religious Education and it is this issue of mutual respect and tolerance towards other faiths, or the lack thereof, that has been a continuous theme for the SACRE Adviser. The sensitivities that exist in contemporary British society only strengthen and validate the need for RE and an organisation to support it.

Relevant Links

- Learn Together Cambridgeshire: Religious Education Advisory Service (Services & Charges and Courses & Training)
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/learntogether/homepage/31/religious_adviser
- Cambridgeshire County Council:
Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/279/children_and_families_working_with_partners/3

Formal Complaints

There have been no formal complaints made to the Local Authority.

Collective Worship

SACRE has discussed the value and importance of Collective Worship in schools. We fully support its importance as it contributes to the ethos and social cohesion of a school. We recognise that Collective Worship can enhance the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.

Training has been offered to Governor Services on the importance of Collective Worship and its role to support evidence for SMSC of pupils across the school.

A SACRE working party has been established with a brief to create support documents, one of which will be advice to Headteachers and Governors on the importance of Collective Worship within schools. SACRE hopes to publish this document in the next academic year. In addition, SACRE members have volunteered to carry out Collective Worship observations: these will be reported on next year.

Contribution of SACRE to Social and Racial Harmony Agenda

In October 2014 the Learning Director wrote a letter to all schools regarding the 'Trojan Horse' affair and cited the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus as a resource for teaching contentious issues. SACRE will continue to provide support and guidance to schools in light of religious tensions.

In January 2015 two of the Young Ambassadors for RE from St. Bede's Inter Church School spoke to the Cambridgeshire SACRE about their roles, and about the importance of RE. They explained how they were appointed by the RE Council for this national role, and showed the video they had made as part of their application. The video highlighted religious and ethical issues in the world and how good RE can give young people the opportunity to understand the world better and engage in important issues. The quality of the video ensured the success of their application, and since then they have gone to parliament to help the APPG for RE promote the importance of RE, spoken about the importance of RE to a panel of experts and stakeholders (including the then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove), taught a KS3 RE lesson to KS2 children, developed a Church Trail around Cambridge, and organised a celebration of the Passover for the whole of Year 7 working with a member of the Board of Jewish Deputies. Their current project, which has been posted on the RE Council's website, is to create a presentation answering the question "How does Jainism prepare people for life in modern Britain?" for which they have visited a Jain temple, and interviewed the deputy chairman of the Institute of Jainology.

If you have any comments about this report, please contact the Cambridgeshire SACRE Clerk via e-mail at RE.SACRE@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

Appendix

GCE AS, A Level and GCSE results for Religious Studies in Cambridgeshire schools: Summer 2015

A Level Religious Studies Cambridgeshire

	2015 Cambs	2015 National	2014 Cambs	2014 National	2013 Cambs	2013 National	2012 Cambs	2012 National	2011 Cambs	2011 National
Number of candidates entries	89	21,313	62	19,850	64	19,200	63	18,850	41	18,550
Percentage of candidates obtaining A*-E grades	98.9%	98.9%	100%	98.8%	98.4%	99.1%	98.4%	99%	97.5%	98.9%
Number of centres entering candidates	10		8		8		9		5	

AS Level Religious Studies Cambridgeshire

	2015 Cambs	2015 National	2014 Cambs	2014 National	2013 Cambs	2013 National	2012 Cambs	2012 National	2011 Cambs	2011 National
Number of candidates' entries	131	30,507	27	29,500	22	27,450	57	26,250	29	26,400
Percentage of candidates obtaining A-E grades	88.5%	92.1%	81.4%	91.1%	95.5%	91.6%	81.7%	91.5%	79.3%	90.7%
Number of centres entering candidates	9		10		10		11		8	

GCSE Religious Studies (full course) Cambridgeshire

	2015 Cambs	2015 National	2014 Cambs	2014 National	2013 Cambs	2013 National	2012 Cambs	2012 National	2011 Cambs	2011 National
Number of candidates' entries	2096 (36% of cohort)	253196	1644	282099	1730	263988	1561	239123	1388	199752
Percentage of candidates gaining grades A*-C	71.3%	70.9%	74.6%	71.5%	71.3%	72.4%	75.7%	73.7%	73.4%	73.2%
Number of centres entering candidates	25		26		28		27		21	

CSE Religious Studies (short course) Cambridgeshire

	2015 Cams	2015 National	2014 Cams	2014 National
Number of candidates' entries	1232 (21% of cohort)	68028	1284	86679
Percentage of candidates gaining grades A*-C	47.4%	51.8%	51.9%	
Number of centres entering candidates	17		14	