
SACRE briefing 15

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National Association of
Standing Advisory Councils
on Religious Education

SACRE BRIEFING

Issue: 15

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Welcome from the Chair

This is a very busy time of year for all involved in education, with examinations, end of school performances, sports days and countless other things to keep us all busy! In the midst of this we thought it would be useful to keep you up to speed with some of the things NASACRE and its members have been up to. In this briefing you will find links to materials from the NASACRE Conference and AGM which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. There is also a little introduction from our new Exec members.

Paul our Chair has recently been able to give evidence to the Commission on RE and you will find a link to this below together with information about this year's Westhill/NASACRE Awards.

Do please keep us informed of what you as a SACRE are doing; it has been lovely to hear about Redbridge's recent meeting, the visit of a Commissioner to Newham SACRE, Teacher Conferences held by Warrington and Halton SACREs and the launch of new Agreed Syllabuses in Tower Hamlets and Gloucestershire. Tweet us @NASACRE

NASACRE Conference and AGM 2017

Delegate feedback – Comment and Analysis

The theme for this year's NASACRE conference, "Preparing for life in Britain today: the contribution of RE", picked up on two areas of national interest that impact on SACREs. Firstly, the increasingly vocal call to raise our population's religious literacy and secondly, the currently convened Commission for RE and its call for evidence to inform future RE policy recommendations.

We were fortunate to hear keynote presentations from speakers with rich, contemporary knowledge in each of these two areas. Dr Joyce Miller who is one of the Commissioners as well as a former RE teacher, an academic, and former Chair of the RE Council, gave our opening keynote address. Joyce gave us a depth of historical and current context to the Commission's work, as well as opening up creative thinking around ways that SACREs might develop in an evolving local landscape, and a broader need for religious literacy.

This led well into table discussions in which SACREs examined and shared with each other ways in which their current work supports both the quality and rigour of RE and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. As well as providing an opportunity to network and share good practice, the session discussion sheets

captured a rich sample of the breadth, depth and diversity of evidence of SACREs' contributions. A summary can be read [here](#). NASACRE has collated this evidence to include in its submission to the Commission, but hopes more SACREs are encouraged to submit detailed evidence directly. We believe it is crucial that the Commission hear direct evidence of these often outstandingly creative, local practices. The discussion support sheet used for the activity is available online for download for SACREs to use if helpful in their meetings and to focus discussions.

Our second speaker, Prof Aaqil Ahmed, shared a lively and thought-provoking talk, blending anecdotes and insights from his work as Head of Religion and Ethics at both Channel 4 and the BBC, highlighting the interplay of both religious and media literacy in negotiating an increasingly complex and interconnected world. This set the keynote for a truly stimulating and lively 'Question Time' panel session, when we were pleased to have the contribution of our Patron, Charles Clarke, pulling together many of the day's key themes.

Sound files from the conference can be heard [here](#).

Whilst many members expressed appreciation verbally on the day, we are always grateful for the high percentage of thoughtfully commented evaluation forms that our delegates complete for us. These provide overall grades across 12 different aspects of the day, ranging from food, venue, etc. through to specific outcomes for SACREs. The overwhelming majority awarded the higher two grades with an average between 'Very Good' and 'Excellent' across every single aspect. It was our first year hosted by the Hilton in York, and this was awarded the highest grade by most delegates. The speakers and our Patron Rt. Hon Charles Clarke, were all cited as highlights of the day, as were the discussions and networking, suggesting the mix of activities was about right to offer something for everyone!

The NASACRE Executive will be meeting before the school summer holiday and considering all the detailed delegate feedback to help us in planning next year's AGM and other ways to support SACREs, in what promises to be another extraordinary year for RE.

Sushma Sahajpal
Executive Member

New NASACRE Executive Members

We have three new Executive members nominated and approved at the AGM.

Here is a little about them:

Claire Clinton says:

I currently work in Newham in the East End of London leading professional

development around Religious Education, Collective Worship, SMSC, British Values, Philosophy for Children (P4C) and coaching with primary and secondary schools. I am proud to be an RE advisory teacher with over 18 years' experience, working in Essex, Redbridge and Newham. I have written and produced award-winning books for Harper Collins, John Murray and Christian Aid. Since 1995 I have been a member of a number of different SACREs, serving in a variety of roles. I am passionate about SACRE's working effectively and inclusively and I enjoy working with others in a team. So I am really looking forward to being a part of the NASACRE executive.

Roy Galley writes:

My background is perhaps a little different from other NASACRE Executive members..

Having retired from a senior management job in 2006, I became a local councillor in 2007 and later joined East Sussex County Council where I have chaired SACRE for 4 years.

My focus with SACRE is to be proactive in promoting religious education, which does not mean woolly ethical debates but real religious knowledge. I am a passionate believer that if you do not understand Christianity you cannot understand the history, literature, art and music of this country or indeed Europe. If you do not try to understand and engage with Islam and other religions and worldviews you cannot understand the modern world. These are vital messages we must promote.

Emily Norman says:

I am a primary school Head teacher with a great passion for high quality RE, both in my own school and also in schools across our Local Authority and Diocese. I have also been an RE leader in three different schools across Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. Currently, I chair Westminster SACRE, which has just undertaken an Agreed Syllabus revision and is exploring ways to best support teachers so they feel confident in delivering excellent RE. Recently qualified as a SIAMS inspector, I am working closely with the London Diocese on its revised RE syllabus.

I believe that religious literacy is a crucial life skill for our children and young people to acquire, particularly in today's world, and that schools have a responsibility to provide safe, open forums for pupils to explore both their own beliefs and practices, and those of their neighbour (both locally and globally).

I am looking forward to learning more about how the NASACRE committee facilitates SACREs in their work to support schools, and what I can do to help.

CVs of Executive members with photographs are on the [NASACRE website](#).

The BIG NASACRE Survey and the Commission on RE

Thank you to all SACREs who responded to the BIG NASACRE Survey. We received

35 completed surveys and Paul has completed the initial analysis of the data. This was used to inform the submission that Paul made on NASACRE's behalf to the Commission on RE's oral evidence gathering session in Manchester on 13th June. The Commissioners did seem genuinely interested in the evidence and asked some interesting and pertinent questions. You can read the evidence [here](#).

Paul is intending to do some further analysis and will publish this as soon as he is able.

The Westhill/NASACRE Awards 2017-18

Ten applications for an Award for 2017-18 were considered by the Awards Panel; this was a stronger field than in the previous two years. An eleventh application failed to be properly received electronically and is being given separate consideration. In the light of this glitch, new safeguards will be in place in future rounds.

The Awards Panel was able to identify three applications as "front runners", and these were given the full amount requested. Three further applications were judged to be 'also-rans'. The Panel had difficulty differentiating between these, and sought to share the remaining funding between them. After consultation with the three SACREs concerned, this was agreed. The outcome of the Panel's decisions was announced at NASACRE's Annual Meeting, and is as follows:

Buckinghamshire SACRE £3,000*

Newham SACRE £4,000

N. Yorkshire SACRE £2,725*

Shropshire SACRE £3,350

Staffordshire SACRE £2,725*(*)

Suffolk SACRE £4,000

(* SACREs sharing the remaining funding)

Two points of interest featured quite strongly in the applications. The first concerned the problem of enabling pupils in largely monocultural communities to have a meaningful encounter with religious diversity. Though Britain is now a very diverse society, this is not experienced at first hand across swathes of rural England, nor in some urban areas. Several proposed Award projects addressed this issue, in a variety of ways, e.g. school interchanges or twinning, diversity teams visiting schools, or social media initiatives. An evaluation of the effectiveness of these various strategies would be a good step forward.

The other theme concerned the overlap between RE and related areas of the school curriculum - PSHE, SMSC, community cohesion, citizenship, Prevent, and so forth.

Where does RE end, and other agendas take over? The answer is not clear-cut, and further exploration of this theme is needed.

Rev. Prebendary Michael Metcalf
Awards Panel Convenor

Annual Subscription to NASACRE 2017-18

We are very pleased to say that the annual subscription for membership of NASACRE will stay unchanged at £95 per SACRE for the forthcoming academic year 2017-18. Invoices are being sent to SACREs this month, with a reminder that from September access to the "Members Only" pages of our website will require the new password, released only to SACREs in paid-up membership.

It might be at least ten years since we raised the annual subscription to its present level. What excellent value for money the current £95 represents!

Through NASACRE, SACREs can tap into free expert advice and consultation, receive a termly Briefing (this term 2 Briefings!), and have their interests and concerns represented on the national stage, with government, the Religious Education Council, the Inter Faith Network, and more. All this is made possible because the officers and the Executive Committee of NASACRE give their time without cost and receive no remuneration beyond travel expenses for the regular work they do on behalf of NASACRE and you, our SACRE members.

Please bear this in mind as we let you know that the Executive Committee will be considering a suggested raise to £105 for 2018-19.

Rev. Prebendary Michael Metcalf
Treasurer, NASACRE

Schools' use of faith visits and faith visitors

We have held some discussions with officials at the 'Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Division' of the DfE concerning advice given to schools with regard to faith visitors to schools and also schools visiting members of faith groups. We are hoping to develop the existing advice and are looking for SACREs to provide us with examples of good practice that we can either develop or send to the DfE. The Department's current guidance on hosting speakers is available [here](#).

If your SACRE has produced guidance on this in the last few years, or if you have good impact studies of the benefits of these visits, please **email** them to us via the chair.

Thanks
Paul Smalley

Survey on racial and religious discrimination

Recent reports published by newspapers, policy makers and NGOs have highlighted evidence of increased religious and racial discrimination. In the latest report published by the British Youth Council Youth Select Committee, (BYC), chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow MP, the Select Committee made several recommendations for teachers and schools in the light of the UK's decision to leave the European Union (EU). The BYC conclude that the decision to leave the EU has 'repercussions' for young people, education and their communities (Youth Select Committee, 2016, 3).

The report highlights several issues and recommendations:

- Need for stronger RE and extra curriculum time
- Statutory PSHE with compulsory modules on racism and religious discrimination

Researchers at Edge Hill University are therefore interested in Secondary RE teachers' views on:

- Whether there has been any impact from the referendum on pupils
- If there has been an effect on pupils, the nature and character of the effects

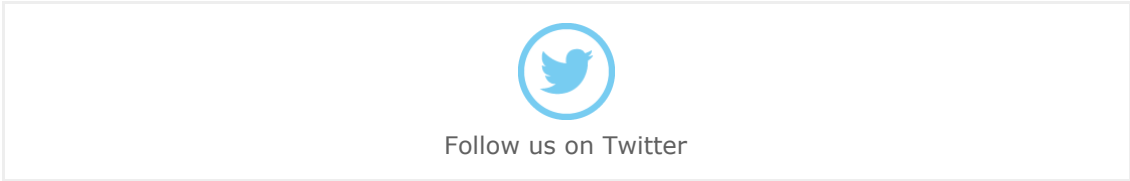
If SACREs were able to forward the survey to teachers of Secondary RE their responses will help to inform further research into the development of religious literacy programmes to tackle discrimination. The link is [here](#).

Thank you
Paul Smalley

SACRE items for your Summer Term meeting

- Check the invoice arrangements for your **NASACRE membership**. If your LA payment methods have changed please check that payment takes place. You will be able to check your status for 2017-18 on the database after September.

- 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.
- Email chair@nasacre.org.uk with details of any events you are holding during this term and next.
- Discuss your summer holiday plans!



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