

SACRE briefing 25

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National Association of
Standing Advisory Councils
on Religious Education

SACRE BRIEFING COVID-19

Issue: 25

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Welcome and update from the Chair

"Nobody told me there'd be days like these. Strange days indeed", sang John Lennon prophetically in 1984. This Briefing is different from previous ones in that it is dominated by the implications of the Covid-

19 pandemic, and offers SACREs support in unprecedented times.

It is also my last Briefing as Chair. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Chair and am happy to be able to hand over the reins to Dr Robert Morgan. To think when I began as Chair, the Commission on RE had not even been proposed....

I have particularly enjoyed meeting so many people involved in SACREs up and down the country – my last visit was to Liverpool SACRE last term (below).

Most unfortunately, we have no option but to cancel our 2020 AGM and Conference (see below). We shall miss meeting and sharing with members this year, but we can promise you that our intention is to save all our best plans and - in some way - offer them later. Watch this space for news...



Best wishes to you all, and Stay Safe!

Paul Smalley

NASACRE Annual AGM and Conference 2020 - CANCELLED!

Due to the national shutdown and the terrible effects of the coronavirus pandemic, we have cancelled our annual AGM and Conference on 18 May.

Our next Conference will now be held on **Monday 24 May 2021** at the same Crowne Plaza Hotel: London - the City. We are also booked to gather in Birmingham in 2022.

NASACRE Executive Membership Updates

At our 2020 AGM, we were due to appoint a Vice Chair, as Paul Smalley will be handing over the Chair to our current Vice Chair, Robert Morgan, and will in turn rotate to become Executive Assistant.

As we go to press, there is one nomination for Vice Chair, and that is for one of our existing Exec members to step up to that role. In the circumstances; when the Exec is not able to meet in the normal way and when we have no idea when future meetings can be held, we think it prudent that we maintain the status quo. Others whose terms of office are up - Treasurer, Secretary, 3 Exec members - have been renominated by their SACREs to continue, and unless we hear that you, our membership, is unhappy with that arrangement, we propose they be re-instated en bloc. If there is a SACRE wishing to make a new nomination, please refer to the **details on the website** and be in touch before the closing date of **Monday 11 May**.

Please contact **NASACRE** for more information. Nominations need to be made by the Chair of the member's SACRE (or vice chair if the nominee is the Chair), in advance of the original AGM date of 18 May.

All SACREs which have already paid for Conference places will receive a letter inviting them to carry over their booking(s) to next year or to request a refund.

Reports for 2019-20, usually presented at the AGM, will be published on the website by the end of May.

Treasurer's Role

We have been seeking a replacement for our long-standing treasurer, Michael Metcalf. Under these exceptional circumstances, Michael Metcalf has been renominated by his SACRE to continue to serve for a year, until the AGM in 2021.

The NASACRE Executive has agreed that an honorarium is appropriate for someone prepared to do this important role for NASACRE to reimburse them for the time commitment the role needs. Should someone be nominated, Michael is happy to work alongside this person doing the job jointly, whilst they grow into the role over the next year. Do you know someone suitable? If so, please **download details here** and return an application form by **Monday 11 May**.

National update

Advice from the DfE on SACREs and Covid-19

During the current challenging pandemic situation, this term many SACREs and ASCs around the country have cancelled or postponed meetings and the few who meet may struggle to be quorate. Understandably, a number of SACRE members chose not to attend before the current quarantine situation either because of underlying health conditions, age, dependence on crowded public transport and other concerns related to the Coronavirus crisis.

NASACRE therefore sought advice from the DfE about some of the possible ways in which SACREs might address these issues for the duration of the current and very challenging situation. Where SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences are continuing to meet, NASACRE asked the DfE if in order to ensure a quorum, it might be acceptable for members to participate and vote via various online platforms?

The DfE official advises:

- *In my view, the legislation doesn't specify the way/format in which a meeting should be held or voting conducted. As long as the approach is accessible to all and enables every member to fully contribute and to register their vote, this should be acceptable.*

NASACRE must emphasise that this is advice only and not statutory in any way, but it may help SACREs (and ASCs) to find practical ways ahead and continue to function in at least some form during these difficult days.

Another concern for some SACREs is that when Determination renewals are under consideration, they cannot be passed or declined through a formal vote if the meeting is inquorate. In the challenging circumstances in which we find ourselves at the moment, NASACRE asked whether it is therefore appropriate for SACREs to advise schools that they can continue with their current Determination, even if it has technically expired, until a renewal application can be considered at the next available quorate meeting?

The DfE official advises:

- *In the circumstances, it is reasonable for the school to rely on their most recent Determination. It is very unlikely that a parent would challenge this arrangement given the circumstances.*
- *Alternatively, if the SACRE has set clear criteria to be met for acceptance of an application, then renewal applications could be administered/determined by a delegated person on its behalf – with only doubtful cases or those which should be refused, referred to the SACRE for a formal decision.*

New HMI Leading on RE

NASACRE welcomes the announcement of Dr Richard Kueh as the new Ofsted Subject Lead for Religious Education. Richard is well-known to the RE world through his work on curriculum. NASACRE looks forward to working with Richard in his new role to continue to promote excellence in the study of religion and worldviews.

NATRE National RE Ambassadors

RE Ambassadors continue to support RE teachers networking together in Local Authorities and regions across England. Joanne Harris and Claire Clinton presently setting up two conferences that will run in the South and then repeat in the North for those who lead RE local groups or RE networks, to enable them to access some training to help them in this important role.

If SACREs have teachers who lead local groups within their area, and who would benefit from some support and training, then please do ask them to get in touch with claire@natre.org.uk for further details.

The Southern conference had been booked for 30 June in a central location, but Joanne and Claire are now deciding whether to hold this conference virtually, or cancel and rebook a new date for the Autumn term. Watch this space!

National Leadership pilot for RE leaders

Claire Clinton is now chairing a steering group for a new pilot leadership programme which builds on the AREIAC REvitalise programme which ran last year. It aims to mentor potential national leaders of RE across a one- to three-year time frame.

"We need to build a leadership community that can work effectively together at a local and national level in RE. There is an awareness amongst many RE advisers that the next generation of potential leaders needs equipping before we lose the expertise of many RE advisers who are nearing retirement." Claire Clinton

This year the pilot programme has four teachers who have started Stage 1 which uses the Culham St Gabriel's **Teach:RE** course as its basis. There are nine teachers on Stage 2, further developing their leadership and understanding of curriculum, pedagogy, policy and research.

As part of the programme some participants will be attending SACRE meetings as observers.

For more information:

<https://www.cstg.org.uk/programmes/pilot-leadership-programme/>

or email claire.clinton@rematters.co.uk

Commission on RE (CoRE) - Recommendation 8

Claire Clinton has been asked by the REC to head up a pilot project to investigate Recommendation 8 of the CoRE report in partnership with NASACRE. Claire will be working with Dr Lorraine Foreman-Peck, Honorary Research Fellow at Oxford University. Lorraine specialises in the philosophy of education, programme evaluation and practice-based research. She has written on action research methodology, evidence informed practice and research ethics.

The following SACREs so far have expressed an interest to be part of the project: Hampshire; Barking and Dagenham; West Somerset; Richmond; Manchester; Halton and Warrington jointly; Bath and NE Somerset.

The scope of the project over the next 2 years:

1. Research all SACRE funding in terms of support and finance. This will build upon the work that was done in 2017-18 by NASACRE, and will provide statistics we can use to compare nationally what is going on for SACREs.
2. Action Research with eight SACREs from across the country who have expressed an interest in trialling work as a LANRW as action research

The findings from this work will then be shared publicly.

If you would be interested in taking part in the project then please do get in contact with Claire at claire.clinton@rematters.co.uk

Agreed Syllabi

In each Briefing we have been alerting you to agreed syllabi which you might like to look at, adapt or adopt, if you are in the process of reviewing your own syllabus. We would like to remind SACREs that it is for each individual SACRE/ Agreed Syllabus Conference to make its own decisions about what is best for their particular context. By naming local authorities, we are providing you with a range of different approaches and syllabi from which you can make an informed choice. NASACRE can not endorse (or recommend) any particular syllabus.

The following SACREs have recently reviewed and published their agreed syllabus:

- Richmond
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Derbyshire

From the Inter Faith Network

The IFN has been collating and publishing the ways that faith communities and inter faith bodies are responding to the Corona virus/Covid-19 crisis. The link can be found at: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/news/faith-communities-and-coronavirus>. This is being updated on a weekly basis as more responses come in.

The IFN has produced a resource for Primary schools, aimed at teachers in upper Key Stage 2, which explores inter faith activity in the UK – with a focus on England. The resource has a teacher introduction and four units that can be used to explore inter faith activity, looking at issues such as dialogue, social action and sport. Each unit has a series of hyperlinks that link teachers and pupils to actual projects across England with a series of possible tasks to assist learning. It can be found at: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/learning-about-inter-faith-activity-a-primary-resource>.

Materials to support RE for children at homes while schools are closed

Here is a **letter** - adapted from one produced by Lesley Prior for her SACREs that your SACRE may wish to personalise and circulate to Primary schools.



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