

SACRE Report on local, regional and national RE news : compiled by Jan McGuire June 2016

1. Educational Excellence Everywhere: the implication for SACREs : *Chair of NASACRE, David Hampshire*

In March 2016 the government published the White Paper: *Educational Excellence Everywhere*. The White Paper sets out the government vision for schools which, if the proposals become law, will have an impact on SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences.

Will the government seek to establish a national standard for RE or will there be a re-think about providing a locally agreed syllabus? What will further 'Academisation' actually mean for RE?

It is important to focus on the current situation. Many White Papers have proposed changes that have not come about. However, certain things are clear:

- For the time being, the current law remains in place. Local Authorities have to appoint and maintain a SACRE as set out in statute and statutory instruments.
- Agreed syllabuses have to be reviewed at least every five years and a revised syllabus published on the recommendation of an Agreed Syllabus Conference. Suffolk will begin this process in the next academic year.
- These functions have to be maintained even in authorities that currently have no schools to which an agreed syllabus or SACRE's advice applies.
- SACREs have to report annually to the Secretary of State on the advice they have given and the response to that advice.

It is also the case that Local Authorities are legally responsible for the education, training and recreation of all children and young people up to the age of 19 (and in some cases, 25 as a consequence of the Children Act 2004). This responsibility includes the religious education of pupils in whatever educational establishment they might be in, whether within or beyond the boundaries of the Authority. Hence, SACREs have a clear role in ensuring that the quality of religious education and collective worship is high for all children whether they are in a maintained community school or not.

2. **Fit for purpose? : A critique of the Purpose of Study and Aims of the REC's 2013 Framework for RE: NASACRE's Treasurer shares a personal perspective on the RECs Framework for RE**

Recent reports charting the present fragmentation of RE envisage a national syllabus in RE, as part of the way forward. More recently still, the government appears suddenly to be taking steps to tackle the situation. Currently, the REC's proposed [National Curriculum Framework for RE](#) (2013) is at the forefront of the stage. It is therefore a matter of acute urgency and gravity to consider whether the Framework is fit for purpose.

How can we ensure that RE is academically rigorous and respectable? What should be included in the academic study of religion? Should RE remain inclusive, in the character of the locally Agreed Syllabus?

So, is the Framework "fit for purpose? Can it be rescued and re-jigged?

Do have your say. Speak to SACRE members, get involved with social media debates and consultations.



3. **Are you aware of the RE Quality Mark?**

The RE Quality Mark award acknowledges and celebrates outstanding RE, recognises good practice and provides a powerful tool for development. Suffolk Schools which have applied for the award have found that it affirms the work they are already doing, raises the profile of the subject and gives them ideas and confidence for developing their practice even further.

The criteria based School Evidence Form enables RE subject leaders to determine their award level and also helps them to consider critically five different aspects of practice:

- Learners and Learning
- Teachers and Teaching
- Curriculum
- Subject Leadership
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The cost of the REQM is £475. SACREs may consider offering small grants to support interested schools. In addition, schools which have fewer than 150 pupils, are categorised by Ofsted as "requiring improvement" or in "special measures", may be eligible for a £275 grant.

Visit the [REQM website](#) or contact Jan McGuire on janmcguire@btinternet.com for further information.

4. All Party Parliamentary Group on RE report: Paul Smalley, Vice Chair of NASACRE provides a report of the APPG on RE meeting held in January 2016

Combating extremism, and promoting community cohesion and character development: the contribution of Religious Education to schools

The first meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Religious Education since the election was held on 19th January 2016. Fiona Bruce MP, Chair of the APPG, welcomed around 80 people including a number from the NASACRE Executive and local SACREs to Committee Room 10 of the Houses of Parliament.

First to speak were Ron Skelton and Adiba Khan Head and Head of RE from Broadway school in Birmingham. Their school was held up as an example of good practice as they use faith and interfaith work to ensure they have 'rounded' pupils: promoting British values and developing character in RE. Their (mostly Muslim) pupils visit different places of worship, such as a synagogue, and are encouraged to discuss controversial issues, such as jihad.

David Hampshire, chair of NASACRE, focused on challenging the contemporary understanding of all extremism as being evil, and argued that extreme pacifism (as exemplified by the Quakers) or generosity (such as that of St Anthony) should be celebrated in schools. He stated that RE cannot change the world in an hour a week, but offers the opportunity to look at countervailing narratives.

Nigel Genders Chief Education Officer for Church of England asked 'What is RE for?' and suggested that viewing RE primarily as a means to an end risks distorting its primary purpose: of promoting theological enquiry and religious literacy. He said RE can make a contribution to combatting extremism, or developing community cohesion and character building, but we need to keep some separation between Prevent and RE. RE should focus on the impact of faith in the lives of believers, and provide the tools to answer the big questions, such as the source of identity that so many young people are searching for. He wants the whole curriculum used to develop SMSC and character.

5. Suffolk SACRE and the Prevent Project 2016: Teaching Controversial Issues

It gives SACRE great pleasure to attach a link to the recently completed '**Teaching Controversial Issues Toolkit**'. - <http://www.suffolklearning.co.uk/11-19-learning-teaching/religious-education/sacre/prevent>

'The Teaching Controversial Issues Toolkit' is a flexible, non-prescriptive framework written **by teachers for teachers** as a result of a comprehensive consultation process at six education hubs across Suffolk. The Toolkit provides a **new** and simple '**6 Step Plan**' methodology and a bank of **exemplar resources** to support teachers delivering controversial or sensitive issues; with a focus on 9 themes related to Prevent.

We hope that you will find the resources accessible, the templates helpful and the 'Toolkit' '6 Step Plan' a practical and successful way to structure the delivery of sensitive and controversial issues. The materials will be formally launched to teachers at the SACRE conference on Thursday 16th June.

For further details, training or school support in implementing the '6 Step Plan: Teaching Controversial Issues' in your school, please contact Jan McGuire: SACRE Servicing Officer and Senior Facilitator and Editor for the SACRE Prevent Project 2016: janmcguire@btinternet.com

SACRE seeks to establish excellence in SMSC (*Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural*) in all schools, recognising the SMSC curriculum should support and '*encourage dialogue, rather than closing it*

down’.

‘It is important to emphasise that the Prevent duty is not intended to stop debating controversial issues... On the contrary, schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand’ the issues raised by the Prevent duty ‘and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge’. Department for Education (DfE)

6.SACRE Annual Reports

It is a statutory requirement for SACREs to publish an annual report and to send this to the Secretary of State, ideally by the 31st December each calendar year. (2014-15 Mary Myatt and Jan McGuire)

7.The **Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE**, formerly President of the Family Division of the High Court was the first female Lord Justice of Appeal and until 2004, was the highest-ranking female judge in the United Kingdom. She has chaired many high profile enquiries and inquests. Baroness Butler-Sloss served as Chair for the recently published Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life: [Living with Difference](#).

- Much greater religion and belief literacy is needed in every section of society, and at all levels. The potential for misunderstanding, stereotyping and oversimplification based on ignorance is huge. The commission therefore calls on educational and professional bodies to draw up religion and belief literacy programmes and projects, including an annual awards scheme to recognise and celebrate best practice in the media.
- The pluralist character of modern society should be reflected in national and civic events so that they are more reflective of the UK’s increasing diversity, and in national forums such as the House of Lords, so that they include a wider range of worldviews and religious traditions, and of Christian denominations other than the Church of England.
- All pupils in state-funded schools should have a statutory entitlement to a curriculum about religion, philosophy and ethics that is relevant to today’s society, and the broad framework of such a curriculum should be nationally agreed. Butler-Sloss concludes that there needs to be an open discussion with regards to the legal requirement for schools to hold acts of collective worship rather than inclusive times for reflection.
- In framing counter-terrorism legislation, Butler-Sloss states that the Government should seek to promote, not limit, freedom of enquiry, speech and expression, and should engage with a wide range of affected groups, including those with which it disagrees, and also with academic research. It should lead public opinion by challenging negative stereotyping and by speaking out in support of groups that may otherwise feel vulnerable and excluded

8. **Professor Adam Dinham** is Professor of Faith and Public Policy at Goldsmiths, University of London. With Martha Shaw, Professor Dinham is the co-author of [RE for REal: The future of teaching and learning about belief](#).

In a context of deep religious illiteracy in the UK, RE for REal explores the role of schools in equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to engage effectively with religion and belief diversity, in schools, in their communities, in future workplaces and in wider social contexts.