



**Bracknell Forest
Standing Advisory Council
for
Religious Education
(SACRE)**

Annual Report

2006/2007

BRACKNELL FOREST SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2006/2007

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the tenth Annual Report of Bracknell Forest SACRE. The academic year covered by this report has seen a number of changes to membership. We have been very pleased to welcome Felicity Allen as the representative of the NAS/UWT (our first ever) and Martin Surrell, who took the place of Nasir Sabir as the Education Department adviser to SACRE. Following the local political elections Cllr Mrs Jacqui Ryder, Cllr Ian Leake and David Fawcett have been replaced by Cllrs Andy Blatchford, Scott Burrows and Trevor Kensall. Sadly, we had to say farewell to Julie Graham, who retired from her post of Headteacher at the end of the school year. Julie had contributed significantly to the work of this SACRE since the inaugural meeting in 1998, so I take this opportunity to record our grateful thanks and best wishes for her retirement.

Overall the year was one of steady progress and consolidation. The feedback from schools regarding the new Locally Agreed Syllabus continued to be positive. Examination results in RE were generally very good, reflecting the continuing high quality of teaching in Bracknell Forest schools. Selective use of the RE artefacts continued, although SACRE remains concerned over the loss of the Resources Centre support officer, who had monitored carefully the loan system to schools, and the lack of a dedicated replacement member of staff. SACRE is indebted to Sam Hunt for her continuing commitment to ensuring we have a high quality selection of artefacts and an up-to-date catalogue.

The annual Berkshire SACREs' conference in June welcomed Mark Chater from QCA as the speaker. As usual it was efficiently organised by Jo Fageant and those who attended found it an enjoyable and thought-provoking session. Several members also attended a most useful training session organised and led by the Revd Colin James and Jo Fageant. Also under the auspices of training I attended a national conference entitled "Strong SACREs, Good RE", which proved useful, but also focussed attention on the high expectations of QCA and other national bodies, despite the limitations made inevitable for many SACREs by their being essentially voluntary with solely an advisory role and mostly with very modest budgets.

In this context Louise Birley as vice chairman and I made use of the QCA self assessment format for SACREs, the conclusion being that Bracknell Forest SACRE has performed very well. However, it remains a significant challenge to meet SACRE's statutory obligations to monitor RE in schools. After discussions with the education department we have agreed to explore the effectiveness of receiving information from senior advisers as a way in which we can learn what is going on in the schools.

In real terms ethnic diversity in Bracknell Forest borough remains modest, but it was interesting to learn that there are now some 70 different languages spoken by pupils as their first or mother tongue. It has been suggested that SACREs could contribute to the community cohesion agenda, so no doubt we shall be looking at this in the future.

As ever, I remain indebted to all SACRE's members, most of whom regularly attend our termly meetings, for their commitment and enthusiasm, thus making my role both easier and enjoyable. In particular, I have been most grateful for the support and encouragement of Louise Birley in what has been a more difficult year than some.

Gordon Anderson

Chairman

October 2007

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**Council on Religious Education
(SACRE)**

Annual Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Bracknell Forest SACRE has continued to meet regularly each term of the academic year 2006/2007: 14th November 2006, 7th March 2007 and 10th July 2007. All meetings, held at Easthampstead House, have been well attended with representation from the four constituent groups and co-opted members.
- 1.2 Bracknell Forest SACRE Development Plan for the period 2005-2009 has been the key driver for the work of the SACRE. Main elements of the plan can be found in paragraph 5.3.
- 1.3 Working through the self-evaluation proforma provided by Ofsted, the Chair and Vice-Chair judged that, in relation to most duties, the SACRE was fulfilling its role well.
- 1.4 Discussions revealed that several members felt they did not fully understand the nature of RE in schools and the possible distinctions there might be between approaches in community and faith schools. It was acknowledged that is was an area that could be valuably addressed in a future meeting.
- 1.5 Changes in membership of the SACRE outlined in the Chairman's Foreword meant that members had to give some thought to induction training. Thanks were expressed to Nasir Sabir, Councillors Fawcett, Leake and Ryder and Mrs Julie Graham for their commitment and contributions to the work of the SACRE.
- 1.6 The SACRE received and considered articles and papers about RE in order to remain well informed about issues of local and national significance in the subject.

2 Religious Education in Bracknell Forest

2.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus

- 2.1.1 The current locally agreed syllabus for religious education was published and launched in July 2006. At the meeting in November, members of the SACRE reviewed the launch of the syllabus and acknowledged that schools would have a significant amount of work to do before the syllabus was fully implemented. However, it was also recognised that much of what the syllabus requires was already being addressed in many schools and the publication of the new document was an invitation to schools to review, update and be creative with their RE planning.
- 2.1.2 The locally agreed syllabus is available on the Bracknell Forest website.
- 2.1.3 Despite a significant level of negotiation with some members of the Berkshire Humanist Group the hoped-for syllabus appendix on Humanism was not produced. It was acknowledged that schools could find support for teaching about Humanism in publications, specifically designed to support primary and secondary RE courses, from the British Humanist Association.
- 2.1.4 Feedback gleaned from meetings of primary school RE subject leaders indicated that the new syllabus had been positively received and was perceived to be helpful. Its introduction and implementation had encouraged teachers to network and plan

together. No such information about responses from secondary school teachers of RE was available.

2.2 Standards in RE

2.2.1 Key Stages 1-3

Discussions held during the year with officers of the local authority resolved that the SACRE would receive information about the provision of and standards in RE from senior advisers. The monitoring of such information has been identified as a key action in the SACRE development plan.

2.2.2 GCSE

From the start of this academic year it has been a requirement for all students in Key Stage 4 to follow an externally accredited course in religious studies although it is not necessary for them all to be entered for an examination. The possible impact of this feature of the new Bracknell Forest agreed syllabus for religious education on examination entries will not be evident until the summer of 2008.

2.2.3 68% of the Year 11 cohort sat a GCSE examination in religious studies.

Fewer students were entered for a short course GCSE examination in RE than last year but an increased number sat the full course examination although this rise was accounted for only amongst girls. All schools offered examination courses in RE and most (5 out of 6) catered for both full and short course entries.

2.2.4 Almost twice as many girls as boys were entered for full course GCSE religious studies whereas equal numbers of boys and girls were entered for the short course GCSE.

2.2.5 The results of girls sitting full course religious studies in Bracknell Forest schools compared favourably with girls' results nationally although far fewer achieved an A* grade. Boys results in A*-B range of grades in the full course are lower than boys grades nationally. More achieve a grade C than is found in the national figures.

2.2.6 The results of boys and girls sitting short course religious studies in Bracknell Forest schools are not very different from the picture revealed in national statistics except in respect of the A* and A grades where students in Bracknell Forest do not do as well as students nationally. The discrepancy is particularly marked in the A* category. Girls, however, do better than girls nationally in achieving B grades.

2.2.7 Thirty one students, twice as many girls as boys, in three schools took an A level examination in religious studies. 81% achieved a grade in the A-C range.

2.2.8 More detailed information about examination trends and entries can be found in appendix C.

2.3 Methods of Teaching, the choice of teaching materials, teacher training

2.3.1 In-service training has been provided on - **awaiting information**.

2.3.2 The termly meetings with RE Coordinators have - **awaiting information**

2.3.3 Following the launch of the new RE syllabus, a small group of primary teachers developed some medium term plans and was happy to share them with others. The SACRE thanked these teachers for their work in recognition of the substantial contribution it had made to the development of RE in Bracknell Forest.

- 2.3.6 The SACRE has continued to monitor and support the development of the resources and artefacts collection that is kept at the Bracknell Forest Education Centre and loaned out to schools. A small number of new books and other materials have helped to supplement the collection during the year. Monitoring reports revealed that artefacts were being borrowed less frequently than in previous years. Upon investigation it was clear that collections of Sikh and Hindu artefacts were used more than others and the SACRE decided these collections should be expanded. The Buddhist and Muslim collections were used least and members concluded this was probably because these religions were not required areas of study in primary schools. The catalogue of the RE resources has been made available on the Bracknell Forest website and RE subject managers have been reminded about the collection at termly meetings. In addition, at a session provided for teachers new to Bracknell Forest, some members of the SACRE were on hand to introduce them to the RE loan resource collection.
- 2.3.7 Members of the SACRE were involved in training for those members of staff at the Education Centre who would be involved in the loan and return of RE resources. The aim of the training was twofold: to ensure both the proper care of artefacts and the gathering of monitoring information.
- 2.3.8 In association with the Anglican Diocese of Oxford, Bracknell Forest's education department highlights for schools the value of the resources published termly by RE Today and offers a discount subscription rate. An index of the contents of these resources, set out religion by religion and updated termly, is available from Jo Fageant.

2.4 Complaints concerning RE

- 2.4.1 No complaints concerning RE have been referred to SACRE during 2006/2007.

2.5 Other matters

- 2.5.1 No other RE related matters have been referred to SACRE by the Authority during 2006/2007.

3 Collective Worship

3.1 Monitoring Collective Worship

- 3.1.1 No information on the provision and quality of collective worship was passed from local authority advisers to the SACRE for discussion during the academic year 2006/2007.

3.2 Determination

- 3.2.1 Bracknell Forest SACRE has received no applications for determinations during 2006/2007

3.3 Complaints concerning collective worship

- 3.3.1 Bracknell Forest has received no complaints concerning collective worship during 2006/2007

4 Links with other Bodies.

4.1 National

- 4.1.1 Bracknell Forest SACRE has continued its membership of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE). Although no one was available to attend the AGM, the Chairman participated in a conference co-hosted by NASACRE and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) entitled 'Strong SACRE, Good RE' and reported back. Members were made aware that a full report on the conference, held in three locations, was available on the QCA website (http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_12797.aspx)

4.2 Local

- 4.2.1 The Chairman attended a half-day session hosted by Wokingham SACRE for five other neighbouring SACREs entitled, 'SACREs whence and wither'. It provided an introduction to the history and roles of SACREs as well as a consideration of the future directions they might take and the challenges they might face.
- 4.2.2 Several members of the SACRE attended a conference established for all the SACREs of the unitary authorities formerly part of Berkshire entitled, 'The future of spirituality, values and RE in a changing curriculum'. Mark Chater from the QCA gave a thought-provoking presentation which stimulated good group discussion. Delegates responded positively to the evening and found it valuable to meet with members of neighbouring SACREs. A full conference report can be found in Appendix D.

5 SACRE arrangements

5.1 Professional and administrative support

- 5.1.1 Bracknell Forest SACRE continues to be served by a Borough Council Committee Administrator. Curriculum support was provided by Nasir Sabir, an adviser from the Children Services Department, until December 2006 when he moved to a new position outside Bracknell Forest. From that time, Martin Surrell has taken on the responsibility of supporting the SACRE. Towards the end of the year, however, negotiations between the Local Authority and the Diocese of Oxford resulted in Jo Fageant (Diocesan RE Adviser) being appointed as a professional adviser to the SACRE. She will attend meetings from the beginning of the academic year 2007/2008.

5.2 Finance

- 5.2.1 The SACRE budget for the period April 2006 to March 2007 was £3,340. The budget for the period April 2007 to March 2008 was £3,370.
- 5.2.2 The primary areas for expenditure for the year have been the expansion and maintenance of the resource and artefact collection, a subscription to the termly mailing from RE Today Services and members' attendance at courses.

5.3 SACRE Development Plan

- Priority 1: To ensure the continued development of an effective and proactive SACRE, offering high quality advice and guidance on religious education and collective worship to Bracknell Forest Borough based on:
- a) a Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education;
 - b) a clear understanding of the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship;

- c) a thorough knowledge of the quality of provision for religious education and collective worship in Bracknell Forest schools;
- d) an understanding of the needs of Bracknell Forest schools with regard to religious education and collective worship;
- e) a clear understanding of current advice from QCA, DfES, OFSTED and other relevant organisations.

Priority 2: To ensure a review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education through an Agreed Syllabus Conference and, after appropriate consultation, to recommend publication of a new Locally Agreed Syllabus for implementation from September 2006.

Priority 3: To provide advice, guidance and resources to assist schools to improve the quality of the provision for:

- a) the teaching and learning of RE in all phases;
- b) pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- c) pupils' preparation for adult life, including education for citizenship and PSHE.

Priority 4: To monitor and report on the quality of teaching and learning, including the use of resources, in Religious Education in Bracknell Forest schools and to make recommendations to the LA based on those findings.

Priority 5: To monitor, evaluate and review the work of SACRE and the implementation of the SACRE development plan.

APPENDIX A

BRACKNELL FOREST STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

CONSTITUTION

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is established in accordance with Section 11 of the Education Reform Act 1988 (as amended by Section 255 of the Education Act 1993) by Bracknell Forest Borough Council acting as Local Education Authority.

1. MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

The Authority shall appoint the members of the SACRE (other than co-opted members or any member representing grant maintained schools) so that they shall represent the following groups:

Group A Christian denominations and other religions

The Free Churches	3	
The Roman Catholic Church	2	
Hinduism	}	
Islam	}	
Judaism	}	-- 2 from other religions
Buddhism	}	
Baha'i	}	
		Sub-total 7

<i>Group B The Church of England</i>	4	
		Sub-total 4

Group C Associations representing teachers

NUT	1	
NAS/UWT	1	
ATL	1	
PAT	1	
NAHT	1	
SHA	1	
		Sub-total 6

<i>Group D The Authority</i>	5	
		Sub-total 5

<i>Co-opted members – not more than</i>	2	
		Sub-total 2

Total 24

2. TERMS OF OFFICE

- (i) Members of SACRE shall serve from the date of their appointment until their successors are appointed by the Authority. They shall be eligible for reappointment.
- (ii) Any member who fails to attend three consecutive ordinary meetings of the SACRE other than for a reason approved by the SACRE shall cease to be a member.
- (iii) The validity of the proceedings of the SACRE, or any of its representative groups, shall not be affected by a vacancy in the membership or on the ground that a member does not at the time represent the denomination, religion or association he or she was appointed to represent.

3. DUTIES AND POWERS

- (i) The SACRE shall advise the Authority on such matters connected with religious worship in Bracknell Forest schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the Authority may refer to it or as it may see fit.
- (ii) The SACRE shall, in particular, advise on methods of teaching the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers.
- (iii) The SACRE shall, on an application made by a head teacher of any county school after consultation with the governing body, consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in the case of that school, or in the case of any class or description of pupils at that school. The SACRE shall arrive at its decision and communicate it to the head teacher in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 of the Education Reform Act 1988.
- (iv) The representative groups on the SACRE, other than that representing the Authority, may at any time require a review of any Agreed Syllabus for the time being adopted by the Authority.
- (v) The SACRE shall, each year, publish a report on its proceedings and those of its representative groups. The report shall specify any matters on which the SACRE has given advice to the Authority and the reasons for offering the advice.
- (vi) The SACRE shall take any action assigned to it by the Authority in relation to the consideration and disposal of any complaint concerning collective worship or religious education in compliance with Section 23 of the Education reform Act 1988.

4. PROCEDURE

- (i) The SACRE shall elect annually at its first meeting in the academic year, a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from among its members.
- (ii) On any questions to be decided by the SACRE, only the representative groups shall be entitled to vote, and each group shall have a single vote.
- (iii) The SACRE shall regulate its own proceedings and may establish committees for specified purposes. Such committees may include persons who are not themselves members of the SACRE. In any matter, which falls to be decided by the members of any particular category, the members of that category may regulate their own proceedings.

- (iv) The SACRE shall determine the frequency of its own meetings so long as it meets on no fewer than two occasions in any academic year.
- (v) The Clerk to the SACRE shall be the Director of Education of the Authority or his representative.
- (vi) The Director of Education or his representative(s) shall be entitled to attend all meetings of the SACRE and of any committees it may establish and to speak but not to vote.
- (vii) The Authority shall meet the costs of operating the SACRE and any committees it may establish.