

NOTICE OF MEETING

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Tuesday 21 June 2016, 5.00 pm

Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Bracknell

To: The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Ms Moira Gaw, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Ian Leake, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mrs Isabel Mattick, Bracknell Forest Council
Ken Blanton, The Free Churches
Rev Jackie Case, Free Churches - Methodist
Rev Paul Collins, Church of England
Chris Cooper, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Madeline Diver, Associations Representing Teachers (VOICE)
Ruth Jackson, NAHT Headteacher
Kathy Hadfield, Co-opted Member
Manfred Lemke, The Free Churches
Carol Logan, Church of England
Mark Olney, Church of England
Arfan Rashid, Muslim faith
Steve Rollins, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Rabbi Zvi Solomons, Jewish faith
Tracey Williams, Church of England

ALISON SANDERS
Director of Corporate Services

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**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
Tuesday 21 June 2016, 5.00 pm
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House,
Bracknell**

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AGENDA

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**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
3 MARCH 2016
5.00 - 6.30 PM**



Present:

David Fawcett, Church of England (Chairman)
Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Bracknell Forest Council
Chris Cooper, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Councillor Ms Moira Gaw, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE, Bracknell Forest Council
Carol Logan, Church of England
Councillor Mrs Isabel Mattick, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Ms Ash Merry, Bracknell Forest Council
Mark Olney, Church of England
Arfan Rashid, Muslim faith
Steve Rollins, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Ruth Jackson, NAHT Headteacher
Anne Andrews, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education
Chris Salt, Bracknell Forest Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Rev Paul Collins, Church of England
Madeline Diver, Associations Representing Teachers (VOICE)
Kathy Hadfield, Co-opted Member
Manfred Lemke, The Free Churches
Rabbi Zvi Solomons, Jewish faith

93. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising therefrom:

(1) Minute 89 (Exam Results 2014/15)

The validated data for the 2015 exam results was now available and Chris Salt circulated a summary of the KS4 school performance figures in GCSE Religious Studies for Bracknell Forest Schools together with a resume of national data for Religious Studies entries and grade attainment over the period 1993 to 2015. The Committee was pleased to note the continuing strong performance of Edgbarrow School, where 100% of the 44 entrants achieved A*-C grades. While some of the other schools appeared to have performed less well, it was noted that at Ranelagh, for instance, entry for the Religious Studies exam was compulsory rather than optional which inevitably led to a range of grades being achieved. Nationally, the number of entrants for Religious Studies GCSE had risen steadily over the past 20 years to a current high of 295,730. In 2015, 72.2% had attained A*-C grades compared to 69% across Bracknell Forest.

(2) Minute 91 (NASACRE)

The Committee agreed that Anne Andrews should represent it at the NASACRE Conference due to be held on 17 May 2016 and it was requested that the necessary reservation be made.

(Action: Lizzie Rich)

(3) Minute 91 (Inter Faith Week)

Those who had attended said the Inter Faith Week meeting had been very interesting, with speakers from six different faiths contributing. Longer notice of such events in future would be appreciated.

94. Pan-Berkshire hub

The Committee considered a paper containing a proposal for collaborative working of the six Berkshire SACREs from the summer term 2016, to be led by the Jan Lever consultancy. The proposal comprised two main elements with estimated costs as follows:

- To strengthen the pan-Berkshire Hub, develop communication and lead on the agreed syllabus review - £750 for each SACRE
- For a Hub co-ordinator and project co-ordinator to develop the Crossing the Bridges project, including a system for booking and evaluating visits to places of worship and development of an electronic directory - £1,700 for each SACRE, including £750 for the hub, £750 for Crossing the Bridges and £200 for the Directory compilation

The Committee was favourably disposed towards the proposals in principle, but noted there was no budget currently set aside to meet such expenditure. The Council was in a period of severe financial constraint with most budgets faced with making savings or at best no increase. Successful bids for additional funding may be restricted to those areas in which the Council had a statutory responsibility, for example, for work relating to the syllabus review (where it was essential to work jointly across Berkshire). It was hoped that the forthcoming Conference on British Values would generate some income which could be used to meet some of the expenditure.

After further discussion, the Committee outlined its response to the proposal on the specific questions for consideration of each Berkshire SACRE as follows:

1. Agree in principle with the proposal to appoint a Hub co-ordinator.
2. In the light of feedback from other SACREs to the proposals, to work with Officers to see if budget can be identified to support this.
- 3/4. While the Crossing the Bridges project was supported in principle, there was no budget currently available to fund it. Agreed that further work should be carried to see whether this could be funded in the next 2-3 years, including the possibility of seeking contributions from partners.
5. Agreed that the Chairman would represent the Committee at Hub meetings.
6. Agreed to schedule future meetings during the second or third week of the second half of each school term.
7. Agreed that the Jan Lever consultancy should lead the proposed work as far as the syllabus review is concerned.

(Action: Anne Andrews/David Fawcett/Chris Salt)

95. British Values Conference

The British Values Conference had been arranged to take place on Monday 18 April 2016 at the Education Centre, Easthampstead Park, with Lat Blaylock as tutor for the

day. The one day course would provide teachers of RE in Key Stages 1-3 with 12 high quality learning strategies to promote values through RE.

Reservations to date numbered 20 (from Bracknell and RBWM). It was hoped that further places would be taken up and it was agreed that the Conference be opened for bookings from other Berkshire authorities and advertised across the Diocese. Overnight accommodation (on 17 April) at Easthampstead Park was requested for the tutor.

(Action: Anne Andrews/Chris Salt)

96. Teacher Training

Anne Andrews reported to the Committee on the recent teacher training session which had been held at Easthampstead Park on 1 March 2016. Although more places had been booked, only 8 had attended. Nevertheless a successful twilight had resulted with a focus on age-related expectations, with Key Stage 2/3 teachers explaining what they would expect to see coming through from Key Stage 1. It was clear that the approach to what was taught varied quite significantly from one school to another and this would be an important area to address in the forthcoming syllabus review. Arising from the discussion, it was suggested that the RE Department at Ranelagh School could be approached to see if they were willing to encourage shared use of their resources.

(Action: Anne Andrews)

97. SACRE Newsletter

The Committee was pleased to receive a copy of the latest SACRE News, noting the separate section in this issue relating to collective worship. Chris Salt was asked to check that the newsletter had been issued to all schools and also to arrange for issue to all schools an extract from the NASACRE Briefing (Issue 10) relating to advice for schools about Ramadan.

(Action: Chris Salt)

98. NASACRE briefing

The Committee received from NASACRE a copy of its SACRE Briefing (Issue 10).

Arising from the Briefing, the Committee considered two specific areas relating to syllabuses, teaching and worship in schools following a number of reports that had been issued and summarised in a detailed paper from the Chair of NASACRE, David Hampshire.

A national framework for RE?

The current position was extremely diverse given the variation in curricula across the UK, 174 different agreed syllabuses in local authorities in England and Wales, a range of syllabuses in different Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses as well as several thousand in academy schools. The general view expressed was that there should be a nationally set core framework, covering around 30% of the basics and essentials of the approach to religion and belief education. This would then leave the remainder to be set in locally agreed syllabuses.

Collective worship

A number of views were expressed about the recommendation that the requirement for schools to hold a daily act of broadly Christian collective worship should be abolished. Members generally agreed that there was value in having a period for

spiritual reflection, in the context of Christian or other moral values. This did not necessarily need to take the form of an act of worship, although some thought there should be a place for stories and readings, for singing and for prayer. It was recognised that the present situation where the requirements of the legislation about collective worship were largely ignored was unsatisfactory. However, the Committee concluded by taking the view that any move to make a change in the law was fraught with difficulty.

99. **New GCSE**

The Committee was informed of the new GCSE exam requirements being introduced from September 2016. At present, the only Examining Board to have received accreditation for GCSE in Religious Studies was AQA. The curriculum would pose questions for study about belief and values and how students could develop their own attitude towards religious issues. There would be an emphasis on study being fact focussed, with a requirement to study two religions.

It was important to obtain an early indication of which two religions would be selected for study in schools so that the right training could be offered. RBWM had already commenced a survey about this and Anne Andrews offered to prepare a questionnaire for Chris Salt to send to secondary schools in the Borough to ascertain the relevant information. It was noted that Manfred Lemke, the Free Churches representative, had access to school resources which may be useful in preparation for training for the new GCSE.

(Action: Anne Andrews/Chris Salt)

100. **Any interfaith matters**

None was reported.

101. **The Toolkit**

This was deferred for consideration at the next meeting, to be placed at the top of the agenda together with an item on the SACRE Development Plan.

(Action: Lizzie Rich)

102. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

103. **Dates of Future Meetings**

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting should be brought forward to Tuesday 21 June 2016, to avoid the Referendum due to take place on 23 June 2016.

(Action: Lizzie Rich/All to note)

Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub

Crossing the Bridges Project

Action plan April 2016-March 2017

Aim	Actions	Timescales	People Responsible	Cost	Summer 2016	Autumn 2016	Spring 2017
<p>A. To increase the number of visits by schools to places of worship and visitors into RE lessons</p> <p>7</p>	<p>Facilitate by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing a Project Plan for the SACREs Providing a common booking form and publicising to schools, hosts and speakers Providing a Directory of places of worship hosts and visiting speakers 	<p>June 2016</p> <p>Form produced Spring 2016</p> <p>Autumn 2016: Publicise through e.newsletters in LAs and Diocese, SACRE and Diocesan web pages, teacher networks and host/speaker training events</p> <p>Appoint teacher assistant Summer Term 2016. Teacher collates Directory pages Autumn 2016- Spring 2017</p>	<p>Hub Co-ordinator (sent to SACRE Chairs)</p> <p>Hub-co-ordinator with SACRE advisers and chairs</p> <p>Hub co-ordinator, SACREs, Teacher Directory assistant</p>	<p>Half-day Hub co-ord time £250</p> <p>1 day Hub co-ordinator time £500 for the year</p> <p>1 day Hub co-ordinator time to appoint teacher assistant and to manage his/her work on Directory Summer/Autumn Terms 2016 £500</p> <p>5 days teacher assistant time to collate Directory</p>			

<p>∞</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging schools in the project by dissemination of information Evaluating visits and visitors using the common feedback forms 	<p>Autumn 2016: Publicise through e.newsletters in LAs and Diocese, SACRE and Diocesan web pages, teacher networks and host/speaker training events</p> <p>Autumn 2016 – Spring 2017 Collate feedback forms and report to hosts, schools and SACREs</p>	<p>Hub co-ordinator with SACRE advisers</p> <p>Teacher assistant and Hub co-ordinator</p>	<p>£1000</p> <p>1 day Hub co-ord time to edit, finalise and oversee graphic design of Directory Spring Term 2017 £500</p> <p>1 day Hub co-ord time over the year £500 plus 1 day teacher assistant time £200</p>			
<p>B. To improve the quality of the RE learning experiences children and young people receive during visits or with visitors</p>	<p>Facilitate by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Giving presentation to Culham St Gabriel's Conference, Birmingham (Conference presentation available for SACRE meetings Summer 2016) 	<p>June 30th 2016</p>	<p>Hub co-ordinator and SACRE Adviser Anne Andrews</p>	<p>1.5 days to prepare and deliver presentation and attend conference @ £500 = £750</p> <p>Total Hub co-ord time 6 days @ £500 = £3000</p>			

6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing interactive teaching materials using an enquiry approach to enhance agreed syllabus delivery, and sample materials to support teachers. • To disseminate these materials through teacher network meetings and LA and SACRE web pages and through Discovery RE website (and offer them to RE Online to publicise nationally) • To offer training for teachers and hosts and speakers 	<p>Produced in Phase 1 of project and disseminated through networks and websites Spring/Summer 2016</p> <p>Autumn 2016</p> <p>Autumn 2016 Half day in East Berks Date tbc Venue tbc</p> <p>Half day in West Berks Date tbc Venue tbc</p> <p>(Possibly repeat in</p>	<p>Hub co-ord and SACRE advisers</p> <p>Hub co-ord and SACRE advisers</p> <p>SACRE Adviser to be nominated or Hub co-ordinator</p>	<p>Plus x6 teacher assistant days @ £200 = £1200 Sub total: £4200</p> <p>Costed above</p> <p>1 day preparation 1 day delivery 1 day admin and co-ordination 3 days adviser time @ £500 a day £ 1500</p> <p>Total Hub co-ord time</p>			
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		Spring Term 2017 if more funding available through Westhill Bid)		<p>6 days @ £500 = £3000 Plus x6 teacher assistant days @ £200 = £1200 Sub total: £4200</p> <p>Plus 3 days adviser/hub co-ord time to prepare and run training @ £500 a day = £1500</p> <p>Total 9 days adviser/hub co-ord time @ £500 6 days teacher assistant time @ £200 =£5700</p>			
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Meeting of pan-Berkshire SACREs Hub
4.15 – 6.00pm 18th May 2016
Civic offices, Wokingham Borough Council

Minutes

Present:

Karen Butler - vice chair, Windsor and Maidenhead SACRE
Mary Harwood – chair, West Berkshire SACRE
Stephen Vegh – chair, Wokingham SACRE
Zvi Solomons – chair, Reading SACRE
Madeline Diver – vice chair, Bracknell SACRE
Anne Andrews – RE advisor to Bracknell, and Windsor and Maidenhead SACREs
Jan Lever – RE advisor to Wokingham and Reading SACREs
Alison Harris – Jan Lever consultancy
Emily Waddilove – LA link officer for Wokingham SACRE

Apologies:

Jo Fageant – RE advisor to Slough and West Berks SACREs

Not present:

Lynda Bussley – vice chair, Slough SACRE

The meeting was chaired by Jan Lever, who has now been appointed as Hub co-ordinator.

1. Welcome and introductions

Jan invited each SACRE representative to introduce themselves and to mention the current priorities for their SACRE. Priorities mentioned were:

Wokingham: developing the Hub; further developing the Crossing the Bridges project

West Berkshire: ensuring full membership of the SACRE

Windsor and Maidenhead: supporting secondary RE teachers with the new GCSE

Bracknell Forest: finding a new chair person. David Fawcett, the previous chair, resigned, and Madeline informed the meeting that she discovered recently that he has passed away.

Reading: developing the Hub; developing support for teachers; working with academies

2. Background and context for the Hub

Jan explained that the 6 Berkshire SACREs have been working together for some time, having collaborated on syllabus reviews and held joint summer conferences.

She feels that the more the SACREs can collaborate the greater the benefits, as resources can be maximised.

Ad hoc SACRE Hub meetings were arranged, leading up to more formalised collaborative working on the Crossing the Bridges project during the last year.

3. Update on achievements so far i.e. synchronising meeting dates; Crossing the Bridges project

The Crossing the Bridges project aims to support teachers' main concern and need: developing links with places of worship. The project was launched at the joint SACREs conference last June, to which teachers were invited. Materials have been developed, including interactive booklets to support visits to places of worship, and documents to support the process of booking visits to places of worship. The directory of places of worship is not yet complete, and further work is required to engage more places of worship and to disseminate the project materials more widely.

The syllabus review will need to begin next year, and Jan, as Hub co-ordinator, will be responsible for organising meetings and meeting follow up, and driving the review forward. She will produce a proposed plan for the review, which can be discussed at SACRE meetings.

In order to facilitate the efficient working of the Hub, the SACREs have agreed to synchronise their meeting dates, with meetings taking place during the second or third week after half term breaks.

4. Updates from SACREs on their current position regarding committing to the Hub (funding etc)

All 6 SACREs have agreed that they would like to be part of the Hub. In terms of funding, four of the SACREs have confirmed that they are able to contribute the necessary funds. Bracknell has not yet got official confirmation but are confident that they will be able to secure the funds. Jan believes that the Slough SACRE has the funds but will confirm this.

Action: Jan to confirm that Slough SACRE can contribute funding to the Hub.

A document outlining the funding required was reviewed (see appendix). Jan explained that Crossing the Bridges will just be a one year project during the financial year 2016-17. All agreed that they would like to fund the Hub co-ordinator for 3 days per term. Therefore the total sum required from each SACRE for the year is £1,700. It is proposed that a teacher (or two) works on developing the directory over 6 days during the year. This will involve developing relationships with places of worship.

Zvi suggested that other neighbouring LAs could be involved in the Hub and contribute funding. The meeting agreed that this could be considered in the future but, for the coming year at least, it would be best to work as a group of 6 SACREs.

Wokingham can issue invoices for Hub funding to the other SACREs, and be responsible for paying Jan for Hub work.

Actions:

- Jan to write a plan for the Crossing the Bridges project ready for sharing at forthcoming SACRE meetings. The plan will involve members of Jan's team who live more locally than Jan, including Alison who was present at the meeting. Anne Andrews will also be involved.
- Emily to send invoices to the other 5 SACREs for Hub funding as soon as possible

5. Principles, aims and terms of reference for the Hub

Discussion took place about the mission statement/ aims of the Berkshire SACREs Hub. Aims agreed were:

- To support the provision of outstanding RE for all pupils in Berkshire
- To provide effective support for teachers of RE
- To provide support to places of worship to enable them to contribute effectively to the RE curriculum
- To support effective collaboration between schools and places of worship
- To enthuse and inspire pupils through visits to and visitors from places of worship
- To support SACRE members
- To support SACREs to have complete membership
- To bring together SACRE members and teachers
- To publicise and raise awareness of the work of the SACREs

(Wokingham SACRE has focussed on this recently and could share its work with the other SACREs. The chair and advisor have given presentations at council meetings, governor meetings etc; the SACRE has been publicised at teacher network meetings; a leaflet explaining the SACRE has been produced –the template for this could be shared, for adaptation by the other SACREs)

An introduction to the terms of reference was discussed, which will explain the aims and also the ways in which the Hub will fulfil its aims. It was suggested that this could be divided into three sections:

- support for SACREs
- collaboration between SACREs (e.g. support and training)
- support for hosts/ places of worship/ visitors.

It was suggested that the Hub should also develop and maintain opportunities for gathering feedback from pupils. The teacher(s) working on the directory could gather feedback from both pupils and places of worship. (A feedback form for the project has already been developed)

Possible wording was discussed:

The Berkshire SACREs Hub will provide effective support for SACREs in a number of ways. It will:

- nurture the development and effectiveness of the 6 SACREs

The principles of the Hub were discussed and agreed:

- Willingness to share (e.g. training courses could be publicised across the 6 SACREs)

- Commitment and communication within the Hub and back to SACREs: i.e. commitment to attending Hub meetings, communicating between meetings, reading documents related to meetings, and carrying out actions agreed at meetings
- Commitment to synchronising the dates of SACRE meetings

Jan will support effective communication within the Hub and between the Hub and the SACREs.

6. Discussion and Planning:

- Annual SACRE Hub conference?
- Agreed syllabus review
- Other ideas

Ideas for activities for the Hub were discussed: In addition to the Crossing the Bridges project, how will the Hub achieve its aims?

Training for new members/ Conference:

It was agreed that the Hub could deliver induction sessions for new SACRE members. This would be more cost-effective than each SACRE organising sessions independently, and would also enable relationships to be developed by members across the SACREs. The session could be a 'refresher' for existing members as well as an induction for new members. Such a session is particularly important bearing in mind the syllabus review, the Crossing the Bridges project, and the desire to raise the profile of the SACREs.

It was agreed that it would be good to organise a conference-type event which could incorporate this training for new members. Teachers could be invited as well as SACRE members, and could give presentations sharing their work. Faith representatives could also be invited. It was felt that early in the autumn term would be a good time for such an event, which could take place instead of the usual summer conference which has not been organised for this year. The possible dates of 28th and 29th September were agreed. Stephen suggested that Waingels College could be the venue for the meeting.

Action: Stephen to look into booking Waingels College on either the 28th or 29th September from 6/ 6.30 – 9.00pm

Syllabus review:

Jan will produce a project plan ready for work to begin next spring. There are currently many variables in the education context, with discussions taking place about whether there should be a national curriculum for RE. Two areas for consideration during the syllabus review are likely to be British values and assessment. (British values could perhaps be a focus of the autumn conference). There may not need to be much change, if any, to the main content of the syllabus.

Other ideas:

- Working with trainee teachers (especially necessary for primary teachers who get very little, if any, RE training). Perhaps the SACREs could be the provider of RE training for student teachers?
- Support for teacher networking? – although network meetings are already offered within each LA. Syllabus review meetings will provide opportunities for teacher networking across the 6 LAs, as will Crossing the Bridges training events.

7. Next meeting date

Scheduling of Hub meetings: It was agreed that Hub meetings should take place during the first half of each term. Feedback can then be provided to SACRE members at SACRE meetings which will take place in the second half of each term.

The following dates were agreed:

Thursday 15th September 2016 4.15 -6.00pm

Tuesday 10th January 2017 4.15 – 6.00pm

Tuesday 25th April 2017 4.15 – 6.00pm

- all to take place at Wokingham Borough Council civic offices

Action: Emily to arrange for meeting rooms to be booked.

8. AOB

Westhill Award: Jan explained that there is one award of £4,000 remaining. The deadline for applications is the end of July. Jan suggested that she could write an application to be submitted on behalf of the Hub. The funds would enable the Crossing the Bridges project to be developed even further.

Action: Jan to draft a Westhill Award application to be shared at forthcoming SACRE meetings.

Appendix: Funding for pan-Berkshire Hub activities

Hub co-ordinator

2-3 days per term @ £500 a day:

2016-17:

3 days a term = £1500 = £4,500 a year = **£750 per SACRE**

OR

2 days a term = £3,000 a year = **£500 per SACRE**

Crossing the Bridges project

Project co-ordinator:

2016-17: 6 days during school year @ £500 a day = **£500 per SACRE**

Directory:

2016-17: Teacher time of 6 days @ £200 a day = £1200 = **£200 per SACRE**

Annual training for hosts:

2016-17: Adviser time 6 half days to plan and deliver 4 x half days training = £1500 = **£250 per SACRE**

Total required for 2016-17 per SACRE = £1,450 (for 2 days per term of Hub co-ordinator time) **or £1,700** (for 3 days per term of Hub co-ordinator time)

NB Funding for the **syllabus review** is not included here. For previous reviews, each SACRE has contributed approx £4,000 over two financial years. The advisors feel that this would be a sufficient amount to cover the costs of the forthcoming review.

The Hub co-ordinator role could be partly or wholly funded from syllabus review budgets?

NASACRE AGM 2016 - Notes

Key note 1:

Elizabeth Butler-Sloss talked about the report that was published earlier this year about Faith and Belief in Society. She made it clear that the report is aspirational, rather than factual and that Andrew Copson, who heads up the British Humanist Society, played a large part.

She stated that religious policy has been piecemeal and mostly been trying to catch up with the current situation. The issues as she sees them are as follows:

- The need for all religions to be treated equally under law
- The need for greater religious literacy to combat conflict and stereotyping
- The need to recognise that for many religion and culture are inextricably intertwined
- The fact that affiliation, belief & practice, beliefs and ideas are not evenly interwoven
- The need for greater religious literacy is not just a matter for schools, but for media & government
- What we teach now will affect the leaders who run the country tomorrow and into the future
- Locally agreed syllabuses that sanitise religion
- The lack of inclusion of non-religious worldviews
- Too much Christianity

She sees some of the solutions as follows:

- There should be a statutory entitlement that establishes content and learning objectives
- This should be broad and inclusive
- It should have the same status as humanities subjects
- Teacher training needs overhauling
- The requirement for daily act of Collective Worship should be repealed and replaced with a time for reflection
- Admission procedures for faith schools need overhauling
- Faith schools could have links to different faith schools to ensure breadth and encounter
- The community of a school should engage with the community outside the gates
- There should be independent inspection
- There should be a freedom to debate all views

There were questions from the floor concerning the actions or rather lack of it in response to the various reports, the local nature of SACREs and how the differences between urban and rural areas are to be addressed, the choice of faith adherents for jobs within schools and whether RE really is a humanities subject. A request was made for evidence that the version of RE taught is sanitised. None of the answers really dealt with the questions, in my opinion.

Dilwyn Hunt raised the issue, as did the previous speaker that much of what has been talked about has been going on for ages and that local SACREs have played a large part in that. An expert panel

risked undermining the role of SACREs which have ensured that there are fully-integrated religious and non-religious world views in RE. Collective worship should not be described as being Christian; it is meant to be inclusive though of a broadly Christian character.

Keynote 2:

Adam Dinham: The future of teaching and learning about religion and belief

The PowerPoint is available on the NASACRE website for any who are interested.

He identified 3 main areas for discussion: policy, teaching and learning and young people's thinking.

In terms of policy, he set the scene, including the background and agreed with Dame Butler-Sloss that the current settlement has evolved as a way of keeping up with the real picture. There is more believing without belonging; more belonging without believing and quite a lot of non-belief. As a result of immigration and globalisation people encounter increasing diversity.

As a result, neither a Christian nor a Secular settlement will work.

With the proliferation of academies and free schools which do not need to follow the locally agreed syllabus there is a freedom from LA control. The purposes of RE have multiplied.

RE has been marginalised and colonised – that is pushed to the side and filled with things that are not RE. There are discussions over purpose, content and place in RE. It has sometimes been distributed across other subjects and topics or disguised as philosophy and ethics. In many places it has been given 45 minutes a week, with an annual spend of £1 per child. Other topics such as cohesion, citizenship and ethics are often included.

This has impacts in wider society. Anxiety, indifference and hostility often result. Do we want RE dictated by the new atheists, who seem to have the loudest voices? There is confusion between Religious Literacy and fuzzy secularity, which is often mistaken for neutrality (which of course does not exist).

He recommends a review of SACREs alongside other bodies, the creation of a national panel to develop a national framework and this needs balance. But who are the stakeholders? If faith leaders are the spokespeople, which ones are picked? Who chooses? How are they chosen? For whom do they speak? Who are the others? Not all parts of faith communities meet and have coherence and contact, so who is the final arbiter?

It is a muddle. There are issues over CW, the right to withdraw, faith school admission policies and the position of religion in the wider life of the school.

The purpose of RE needs to be clarified: it is interesting and links to history and art; it is instrumental and has a social element. There is an assumption that more encounters lead to more love, but this is not always the case.

Regarding the content, the RE 4 Real research found that young people wanted more breadth, a "stretchier" idea of what religion is; more lived RE and elements of informal religion and belief. Is there a way that SACREs can look more like the real, local religious landscape?

The structure of RE also needs to be explored. What should go where? The role of SACRE is crucial and it has to include the Church of England, as much is connected culturally and historically to Christianity. RE needs to teach that there is Christianity and other religions too.

The political issue raises the question of timing. Are these issues too big and totemic to handle for little or no gain, but lots of grief?

The key issue is religious literacy as it affects attitudes. But attitude, disposition and feelings come into play, even when there is little or no knowledge. However it is important to recognise that no one can know everything. It is important to learn how to ask appropriate questions in an appropriate way. And everybody can be involved, regardless of religious belief or none.

There needs to be an opportunity for robust disagreement about truth claims, rather than the syncretistic. There needs to be talk about the discovery of truth and what about fundamentalists? Should they be included?

Questions addressed the need for an opt out, the sociological twist often given to RE and the tension between theology and sociology.

There followed an activity looking closely in small groups at the key recommendations from the most recent reports. This is worth replicating in SACRE.

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