



Draft Annual Report

**BRACKNELL FOREST SACRE
ANNUAL REPORT
2008/2009**

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

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the twelfth Annual Report of Bracknell Forest SACRE. In the academic year covered by this report there has been a modest number of changes to membership: we have said farewell to Louise Birley and Gill Ledsham, as well as Cllrs Brunel-Walker and Leake, the latter two replaced by Cllrs Scott Burrows and Trevor Kensall. In addition Rabbi Zvi Solomons replaced Marcia Perkins as the Jewish faith representative and we welcomed Joel Roszykiewicz as our first Buddhist faith representative.

A feature of this year was the first-ever Bracknell Forest SACRE's prize for RE in schools, which was awarded to Garth Hill College for their excellent work focussing on how RE can promote community cohesion. We hope to continue this concept of RE prizes for schools in years to come. We continue to be proud of our RE Resources Centre and pleased to see steady use of the artefacts loan scheme. During the year we learned of similar artefacts available for borrowing from a secondary school in the borough, aimed at the wider community; a welcome development.

The examination results reviewed for the year continue to suggest there is strength and depth in the quality of RE in most Bracknell Forest schools and this view is fully supported by two SIAS inspection reports, which found one school to be good and another outstanding. In recent years SACRE has felt seriously challenged to comply with its statutory duties of monitoring the quality of RE teaching and Collective Worship in all Bracknell Forest schools, so work has begun in seeking ways in which the Local Authority school advisers might assist. We were disappointed to note that the important QCA/DCSF Curriculum consultation gave very little time in which to respond, a factor that seems prevalent with many government consultations and not helpful to bodies that meet just three times each year.

The annual Berkshire SACREs' Conference, so ably organized by Jo Fageant, again was a great success, the theme this year being on identifying issues surrounding gifted and talented children in the context of RE and also children with special needs. BF SACRE continued its membership of NASACRE and was represented at its AGM. We were pleased to have the continued financial support of Bracknell Forest Council, which agreed to maintain a budget of £3,300 on an "if needed" basis. Hopefully this will remain in place, as such sums might be needed if we are to achieve the aims of our Development Plan for 2009-2012, which is currently in the process of being finalized.

Bracknell Forest SACRE continues to benefit from an excellent attendance at its meetings, with enthusiasm and good interest exuded by all. I have been most grateful for the very positive support given by Paula Ridgway, who took on the role of Deputy Chairman at the beginning of this year, and for the tremendous work done by members of working groups, in particular Sam Hunt, Kusum Trikha and Paula Ridgway. We continue to enjoy excellent support and advice from our LA advisers Martin Surrell and Jo Fageant.

Gordon Anderson
Chairman

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Appendix E Joint SACREs Conference Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Bracknell Forest SACRE has continued to meet regularly each term of the academic year 2008/2009: 6th November 2007, 10th March 2008 and 8th July 2008. All meetings, held at Easthampstead House and Easthampstead Park Education Centre, have been well attended with representation from the four constituent groups and co-opted members (See Appendix B).
- 1.2 Members of the SACRE have continued to be appreciative of Gordon Anderson's willingness to be re-elected as Chairman of the SACRE and the continuity of vision and purpose this brings to its work. They expressed their gratitude to Louise Birley for her work and commitment in the role of Vice-Chair when she stood down in the autumn. She was succeeded by Paula Ridgway.
- 1.3 The SACRE was successful in finding a Buddhist representative to join at the start of the academic year. He had attended a recruitment training course run by the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE), was welcomed and played an active part in the life of the SACRE during this his first year of membership. Other new members were: Rabbi Zvi Solomons, Coucillors Burrows and Kensall. Other members left during the year and were thanked for their service: Louise Birley, Gill Ledshamm and Marcia Perkin.
- 1.4 Bracknell Forest SACRE Development Plan has driven the work of the SACRE and was updated in July in order to provide focus for future initiatives. See Appendix C for more details.
- 1.5 Members also continued to review their work against the self-evaluation proforma provided by Ofsted, considering three sections at their November meeting. They judged with confidence that they were in an 'advanced' category for their work on reviewing, developing, implementing and monitoring the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. However, support for collective worship and the contribution to social and racial harmony were assessed as reflecting the 'established' category.
- 1.6 The SACRE received reports, articles and papers about RE in order to remain well informed about issues of local and national significance in the subject. In particular, members gave careful consideration to consultation documents made available from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, later QCDA – Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency) ie the draft of a revised primary curriculum and the draft of new non-statutory guidance on RE. They noted the implications for local action should these documents be published in significantly unchanged form.

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. It is available on the Bracknell Forest website. Following a RE subject inspection of a primary school, the inspector raised a question about the ease with which teachers without subject specific specialist knowledge or training in the interpretation of the syllabus could make effective use of the Bracknell Forest document. Recognising this could be a difficulty for some, the Associate Consultant to the SACRE prepared a brief paper on how to plan RE using the local syllabus. Members of the SACRE, especially the teachers, expressed their appreciation of this guidance and were confident colleagues in schools would find it very helpful. (*Would*

it be a good idea to include the paper as an appendix to this report in order to highlight it once again?)

2.2 Standards in RE

2.2.1 Key Stages 1-3

The SACRE continued to find it difficult to develop a strategy which would enable it to monitor the provision of and standards in RE in Key Stages 1-3. Members were optimistic that closer working with schools advisers might provide them with relevant information.

2.2.2 GCSE

An analysis of examination data will be prepared for inclusion here when it is available. Information about examination trends and entries can be found in appendix C. *(This needs to be inserted)*

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

2.3.1 Termly meetings continue to be provided for RE subject leaders. The format has been one of a presentation then discussion and follow up. *(Details needed from Sam)*

2.3.2 The SACRE has published a brief paper, written by the Associate Consultant to the SACRE, on a recommended planning methodology to provide guidance on the effective use of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

2.3.3 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. The collection was expanded again this year and the catalogue updated and redistributed. An eye-catching supplement about it was included in 'Curriculum News' the regular local authority newsletter to schools. 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. Records show that the Hindu and Sikh collections continue to be those for which there is greatest demand. Following a period of change last year, the loan system is once again running smoothly.

2.3.4 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.

2.3.5 During the year teachers had an opportunity to attend an extremely stimulating course led by Lat Blaylock of RE Today Services, organised by the Diocese of Oxford, entitled, *Exploring Christianity in the Primary School*.

2.3.6 The SACRE established a small working party to draw up a submission for a NASACRE/Westhill Young Inter-Faith Projects award. It was not possible to finalise this in time for the 2009/10 awards but work will continue with an eye to 2010/11 should the awards continue to be granted.

2.3.7 The SACRE has supported the re-introduction of a termly newsletter for schools on RE.

2.4 Complaints concerning RE

2.4.1 No complaints concerning RE have been referred to SACRE during 2007/2008.

2.5 Other matters

2.5.1 The SACRE was pleased to have organised a RE focused competition for students in Year 9. They were invited to respond to the question, *How might religious education promote harmony in our community?* A prize of £100 and certificates were awarded in July to students from Garth Hill School. Following the successful introduction of a competition, members of the SACRE were keen to establish this as a regular feature of their support for RE. It was decided that the next one would invite entries from Year 6 pupils and that the competition would be a regular two yearly initiative.

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 2008/2009.

3.2 Determinations

3.2.1 Bracknell Forest SACRE has received no applications for determinations during 2008/2009.

3.3 Complaints concerning collective worship

3.3.1 Bracknell Forest has received no complaints concerning collective worship during 2008/2009.

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). One member was able to attend the AGM and provided a very comprehensive report of the meeting for colleagues. The SACRE's Associate Consultant continues to serve on the executive of NASACRE.

4.2 Local

4.2.1 Several members of the SACRE attended a conference entitled, 'Identifying and Supporting Able, Gifted and Talented pupils in RE' established for all the SACREs of the unitary authorities formerly part of Berkshire. Dilwyn Hunt, RE Adviser in Dudley, provided a lively and stimulating presentation. Delegates responded positively to the evening reporting back to those who were not able to attend that it had been very relevant to classroom practice and had raised awareness of the needs of gifted, able and talented pupils of all ages. They also found it valuable to meet with members of neighbouring SACREs. A full conference report can be found in Appendix E.

4.2.2 Members were invited to attend a Shabbat service at the synagogue in Reading in March.

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 is provided by Martin Surrell, a local authority adviser and Jo Fageant an associate consultant. One meeting was also attended by Dan Archer, the Principal Adviser, Social Care and Learning.

5.2 Finance

5.2.1 The SACRE budget for the year of this report was £3,300. *(Is this the exact figure?)*

5.2.2 The primary areas of expenditure for the year have been the continued expansion and maintenance of the resource and artefact collection, the work of the associate consultant and members' attendance at courses.

APPENDIX A

BRACKNELL FOREST STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

CONSTITUTION

APPENDIX B

BRACKNELL FOREST STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Membership and attendance record for the year 2008/2009

Group A	Christian denominations and other religions	(Attendance record)
The Free Churches (3)		
a)	Revd Michael Bentley	(2/3)
b)	Mrs Paula Ridgway	(2/3)
c)	Mrs. Irene Robertson	(2/3)
The Roman Catholic Church (2)		
a)	Ms Louise Birley	(1/2)
b)	Mrs Anne Gibbons	(2/3)
Other religions		
a)	Rabbi Zvi Solomons	The Jewish Faith (0/3)
b)	Mrs Kusum Trikha	The Hindu Faith (2/3)
c)	Mr Joel Roszykiewicz	The Buddhist Faith (2/2)
Group B The Church of England		
a)	Mr Gordon Anderson	(3/3)
b)	Mrs Maureen Beadsley	(3/3)
c)	Mr David Fawcett	(2/3)
d)	Mrs Julie Minter	(3/3)
Group C Associations representing teachers (6)		
a)	Mrs Samantha Hunt -	ATL Representative (3/3)
b)	Mrs Kathleen Nugent -	NAHT Representative (0/3)
c)	Mr Colin Hickson -	NUT Representative (1/3)
d)	Mrs Felicity Allen -	NAS/UWT Representative (1/3)
e)	PAT -	Nomination not yet received.
f)	ASCL Representative -	Nomination not yet received.
Group D The Authority		
a)	Councillor Andy Blatchford	(1/3)
b)	Councillor Mr Brunel-Walker	(1/3)
c)	Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes	(2/3)
d)	Councillor Leake	(1/3)
e)	Councillor Cliff Thompson	(2/3)
2 Co-opted members –		
	Ms Gill Ledsham	(1/1)
	Dr Kathy Hadfield	(2/3)

Meetings were also attended by Priya Patel (1), Katharine Simpson (1) and Amanda Roden (1) (Bracknell Forest Council Democratic Services), Dan Archer (1) (Principal Adviser, Social Care and Learning) Martin Surrell (2) (Local Authority Adviser), Jo Fageant (3) (Associate Consultant to the SACRE) and Phra Nicholas Thanissaro (1) (Buddhist visitor).

APPENDIX C

The updated development plan

APPENDIX D

RE GCSE data

NB. This data includes GCSE results for both Religious Studies and Religious Education GCSEs

Data need to be inserted

Appendix E

Report of the 2009 Joint SACREs Conference 'Identifying and Supporting Able, Gifted and Talented pupils in RE'

Pam Proctor, Chair of the Windsor and Maidenhead SACRE, opened the meeting and introduced the speaker, Dilwyn Hunt.

Dilwyn started by explaining that there is an ambiguity in the use of the terms 'gifted and talented'. Delegates enjoyed his stories about ambiguity: one from Gervase Finn about a headteacher who enjoyed answering the school telephone saying, 'This is the head of John the Baptist' that being the name of the primary school; the other about a nun in her habit saying to a man on a train, 'I think you are the father of one of my children.' He made it clear that he believes all young people are gifted and talented. However, the terms 'gifted and talented' are used as technical terms with specific meanings:

- Gifted learners are those who have ability (or the potential) to excel academically in one or more subjects;
- Talented learners are those who have the ability (or potential) to excel in practical skills such as sport, leadership, artistic performance, or applied skill.
- G&T is a relative term and refers to the most able learners in each school regardless of the ability profile of the school. Dilwyn suggested that every school should work on the assumption that there are young people who are gifted in RE in every year group.
- The National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) has traditionally used the term 'very able' to identify the young people it works with. These children are defined as the top 2% nationally.

Children who are high achievers only in RE are unusual because there is a strong correlation between language and RE. However, it is important for teachers to recognise that some could have poor English and/or handwriting skills. There is no automatic correlation between being gifted in RE and being highly motivated. Young people could have a spiky profile because work set is not challenging and they choose to spark up the lesson by being rebellious. Some might bring social and behaviour problems into class with them. Some refuse to engage because they realise that if they are identified as being good at RE they may be given extra work.

How to identify these young people.

Single numerical data (eg IQ, SATs results, CAT scores) will not sort it out completely. However it is worth asking questions about children who have good test scores but are not doing well in RE.

Teachers can nominate. Nomination will be based on things like pupils' questions, aside comments, levels of engagement, open responses, written work, responses to questions etc.

Teachers will need to be aware that some tasks do not invite G&T pupils to perform as well as they are able. Previous school nomination doesn't always get through to RE teachers. Transition for KS2-KS3 can fail these pupils. Dilwyn gave the example of year 6 pupils who had debated skilfully in a council chamber but were not even asked/allowed to speak for the first few weeks of RE in their secondary schools. Parental nomination can confuse piety with gift/talent.

Dilwyn stressed that being gifted in RE is not the same as being religiously gifted or religiously devout. He described several children and asked delegates to identify whether they were 'gifted in RE', 'religiously gifted', 'a devout child', or 'something else'. He said it was important to acknowledge that some gifted students could be hostile to religion.

Dilwyn then dealt with the tricky question of whether we can split the atom of RE ie might students be significantly better at either 'learning about religion' or 'learning from religion'? He went on to suggest that teachers do not always ask questions or set tasks that extend pupils' thinking and understanding. They often accept cliché answers eg in answer to the question, 'why do Muslims perform Salat?' they accept, 'because it makes them feel closer to God'. This is not a wrong answer but teachers need to push for more. To extend pupils they might be asked to compare with another religion ie horizontal comparison as extension work. They might be asked to compare places where people pray, language used, positions of prayer etc. Sometimes teachers settle for the correct use of technical language as better achievement. Sometimes teachers drift from main topic eg ask an application question such as, 'Muslims pray 5 times a day, what do you do regularly that improves your life.?' They invite empathetic responses eg writing about a child's bar mitzvah saying the child is excited nervous etc without requiring something which reveals a deeper understanding.

So what instead?

Teachers need to recognise that there is a background story to religious ritual and understanding this is what shows 'giftedness'. Dilwyn spoke about developing broader and deeper understandings eg of Muslim prayer:

- a psychological understanding recognises that prayer in Islam helps bring about humility and personal modesty;
- a social understanding recognises that through the same actions and words Muslims feel spiritually linked with Muslims everywhere;
- a moral understanding recognises as well as humility prayer brings about a gentleness of manner;
- a theological understanding recognises that prayer is seen as a gift from God which brings about regular inner cleansing;
- a philosophical understanding recognises that in Islam one's final destiny is in the hands of God.

He suggested it is this that teachers need to be pushing their most able pupils towards.

In relation to 'learning from religion', fairly formulaic arguments are often accepted. Pupils are not always asked to consider the nuances in issues, the shades of grey etc. Teachers need to help children develop reasoning skills by modelling reasoning.

Teachers don't always make best use of seeing colleagues at work in order to learn from one another. A friendly sharing of ideas could make lessons better.

Dilwyn provided information about helpful websites:

- Institutional Quality Standards for G&T Education (IQS):
http://ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/FileLinks/930_qs.doc
- Classroom Quality Stands in G&T Education (CQS):
http://ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/FileLinks/332_MainLink.doc
- 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All' (DCSF) Chapter 4:
<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOderingDownload/Cm%206677.pdf.pdf>
- '2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group' (DCSF):
<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOderingDownload/6856-DfED-Teaching%20and%20Learning.pdf>

He suggested a variety of strategies for appropriately personalising the learning of G&T pupils:

- extra small group tuition
- one to one tuition
- setting or grouping of gifted children
- using trained support staff
- placing young people with an older year group
- listening to the voice of the child – learning conversations
- using ICT resources to identify who might need support
- extra support and tuition beyond the school day
- involvement in out of school activities
- networking with neighbouring schools on joint projects
- pupils having their own personal online space
- pupils (and their parents) being able to access their work online
- engaging parents
- providing individual feedback to pupils (assessment for learning)
- providing diagnostic targeted support

Dilwyn then explained, with examples, strategies which push for the development of thinking skills. These activities often allow children to respond at a superficial level but enable others to fly with much more profound exploration.

These activities include

- identifying the odd one out of a selection of pictures, words etc
- asking 'what would be missed' questions eg If a Christian never prayed, what would they miss?
- asking 'what if' questions eg What if Jesus had never been crucified? What if the Jews had never celebrated the Sabbath?
- community of enquiry activities eg asking what question a particular picture raises in pupils' minds
- comparison of images eg two contrasting paintings of Jesus' crucifixion
- formal debate
- sorting and ordering answers to questions
- working through dilemmas eg should Harjeet, a Sikh youngster, join the Khalsa?
- hopping over superficial recall questions and going for explanations, analysis and evaluation
- modelling the marshalling of an argument

Delegates divided into pre-arranged groups for discussion and then returned for the close of the conference.

Dilwyn finished the evening by challenging us to think about how we could develop the idea of visitors in to schools to share specific areas of specialism - really specialist polished lessons with whole classes or small group – maybe just 20 minutes long. He asked us to think about trying to develop teams of people who could prepare such specialist such areas - small aspects of religion. He challenged members of the SACREs to think about what they could do or how could they support others to do this kind of work.

(Readers interested in the provision for gifted, able and talented pupils in RE may find Dilwyn's article at the following address helpful:

<http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/religious-education-raising-the-bar-for-gifted-and-talented-2780>)

Pam Proctor closed the conference thanking Dilwyn for a very stimulating evening.