



Headteachers in Secondary Schools

31st January 2011

Dear Headteacher

Religious Education and the proposed English Baccalaureate

The Schools White Paper 2010 "The Importance of Teaching" is a major initiative which will affect all Staffordshire schools. In particular, the proposed English Baccalaureate (EBacc) will have a radical impact on the secondary school curriculum, not only in KS4 itself but in the years leading up to KS4. No doubt schools are already beginning to plan for these developments.

One of the success stories in recent years has been the dramatic rise in popularity and take-up of GCSE exam courses in Religious Education/Religious Studies. Students find the courses stimulating, challenging and relevant. Levels of motivation are high, and so are the levels of pupil attainment. For these reasons, the current Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus in RE (launched in 2009) has chosen to base its provision for KS4 entirely on all pupils following an approved external exam course. The relevant extract from the Agreed Syllabus, which has the force of law, is attached to this letter. Whether pupils are entered for the exam itself at the end of the course is at the school's discretion, but their KS4 entitlement in RE is clear and unambiguous.

Staffordshire SACRE can fully appreciate the possible dilemmas faced by headteachers in seeking to respond constructively to the demands which will be placed on their schools by the introduction of the EBacc. SACRE recognises that there may well be a temptation to find time for the required Humanities subjects by cutting the time for RE, and perhaps by diverting experienced teachers with a wealth of expertise in RE into other subject areas. Such a strategy would subvert the provisions of the Agreed Syllabus, would deprive pupils of their legal entitlement, and would marginalise and downgrade Religious Education – at a time when being religiously literate and aware is an essential skill for citizens today and in the future.

May I respectfully ask, on behalf of Staffordshire SACRE, that you bear these points in mind as you engage with the task of planning for the introduction of the EBacc into your school. The County's Senior Adviser in RE, Emma Senior, is always willing to offer advice and support, if contacted.

Please accept our best wishes and continuing good will as we work together with you and your school to provide the highest quality of educational experience for our young people.

Yours sincerely



Rev. Prebendary Michael Metcalf
Chair Staffordshire SACRE

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