

Agenda Item 6

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education 16th November 2022 Report of the Director for Children and Families

An Update on Key Issues

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present members of SACRE with a brief update on key issues that have developed or arisen since the last meeting of SACRE.

2 Summary

2.1 Members of SACRE will receive a brief report on a number of key issues. These are matters which have either been raised at previous SACRE meetings and which have moved forward or matters on which it is appropriate to brief members of SACRE.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That members of SACRE receive the report and note the contents

4 Background

4.1 Since the summer term meeting of the SACRE there have been developments in a number of areas which had previously been agenda items for SACRE or which have local or national importance for RE.

4.2 Members will be briefed on these key developments.

5 Equal Opportunities

5.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on equal opportunities.

6 Financial implications

6.1 Financial implications may be raised; These have been dealt with elsewhere or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

Contact Officer

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Key Issues Report

i) Continuous Professional Development

Mary Gale continues to support RE leaders in several schools through email, virtual meetings and face to face meetings. This has involved supporting schools in understanding *greater depth* in RE assessment, whole class reading through RE texts, planning and preparation for Ofsted '*deep dives*'.

In addition, Mary continues to support a school to work through the Agreed Syllabus and how Understanding Christianity can dovetail into the AS.

Planning support is needed most. Mary has re written some of the planning to support schools. One topic that needed a refresh was learning about *Sacred Texts* in year 5.

Entrust have approached Mary Gale to run face to face courses in the autumn and spring terms to provide network support for teachers either at the central training centre or in individual schools. The autumn course is book for 22nd November 2022 at Entrust. To date 16 schools have booked onto this course

Governors through the Governor Information Pack continue to receive updates on RE in Staffordshire, the status of the AS and the process for the review. They have been encouraged to work in their link governor roles to discuss the impact of the current AS. This information has reached 300 plus schools and over 200 leaders from these school have joined an update webinar where RE was discussed as part and parcel of the information provided. This is unique to Staffordshire as having discussed this at a recent national NASACRE conference it is apparent that many SACRES do not have this avenue to engage so readily with their stakeholders.

Mary attended a local meeting of the NATRE group held as a combination of virtual and face to face meeting in Chadsmead Primary Lichfield in early November 2022 at 4.30.

Mary also attended a virtual meeting of the West Midlands Association of Religious Education Inspectors and Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) on 21st June 2022. The next meeting is at the end of November 2022.

Discussions centred around the AS – see AS section, and updates on resources.

Mary will be attending a Church of England conference in January 2023 looking at various education issues. A report will be available in the February 2023 meeting.

ii) Update on RE Quality Mark application- St Chad's Pattingham.

The school received the SACRE grant to enable them to apply for this quality mark. They are very grateful. The RE lead is working her way through the requirements collecting evidence for the assessment. This will be a virtual assessment and not a face-to-face assessment. They are awaiting more information.

Mary Gale has supported the school to ensure they have a strong evidence base before the assessment. The application from has been checked and Mary made suggestions to improve the application. They have had an Ofsted inspection with a good outcome. The report states that the school has been working on a broad and balanced curriculum and especially made a reference to their work on diversity by using appropriate texts and reading

books. The school was praised for highlighting Black History month in its curriculum. This bodes well for a future positive assessment of the REQM. The school is awaiting its assessment date. This is the 10th anniversary of the REQM, so we will be very pleased if a Staffordshire school is successful this year.

iii) Westhill Legacy project- Explore, Engage, Reflect (EER) in conjunction with Youth Net. Autumn Term 2022 report.

SACRE have funded this project from the 2022-2023 budget through commissioning the Entrust Minority Ethnic Achievement Service- MEAS- to deliver workshops in conjunction with Youth Net.

There was a delay in the release of money from the SACRE budget. Mary Gale followed this up with Entrust and SCC. The budget has now been released and dates for the Spring term 2023 support have been arranged in conjunction with Youth Net.

The following dates are being considered for 2023

Monday 30th Jan Monday 6th Feb

Monday 27th Feb Monday 6th March

iv) Work force data for 2021- See attachment

Notes to accompany the release of school level data from the 2021 DfE School Workforce Census.

This data was reported by schools to the DfE as part of the school census in November 2021

Hours taught for years 7 to 13, in subjects RE, philosophy and all subjects, reported by state-funded secondary schools with electronic timetabling software.

School Workforce Census 2021

61 Staffordshire schools are included.

Aspects to note:

1. Where schools reported that they allocate teaching hours to a specific year group, but have not included RE in that report, **this is indicated by a dot** in that year group column. **18 schools out of 61 schools**

Mary has started to investigate this issue by checking the school websites.

Mary has started contacting these schools and the issue is not always with the teaching of RE/RS but with the admin of filling in the census.

There has been an increase in provision in some schools and a decrease in others. The good news is that out of 61 schools recorded, 21 have increased their provision. Which is good news. Last year only 16 schools increased the time allocated to the teaching of RE/RS.

10 have decreased their provision. Some of those schools are middle schools.

Last year 22 decreased the time allocated to the teaching of RE/RS.

The picture is an improving picture of provision.

Where schools report zero hours in any year group, these are highlighted in red, alongside those recording no hours at all.

Issues to investigate by Mary Gale

- The 0 hours allocations- anywhere in the list. This includes 3 schools, last year this was 7 schools.
- The schools where there are dots- showing no hours recorded for RE/RS.
It is the general feeling that this is not essentially a true account as the census form may have been populated incorrectly.
Some of these are Catholic schools and we are certain that RE/RS is taught.

Eg Blessed William Howard Catholic school..... on the school website it is clear that it allocates 5 hours per every two weeks for the teaching of RE/RS for all year groups.

Paget High school allocates 50 minutes per week to RE/RS for some year groups and for other year groups 1 hour 40 minutes per week.

Norton Canes High school allocates time to RE/RS even though the data shows a dot. Mary Gale has visited and provided support and resources- she has also spoken to their governors about this.

Mary will continue to work on this project as time and resources allow.

Standards

Staffordshire SACRE reviews and discusses standards and achievement in RE during meetings as appropriate. There were no external examination results from the summer of 2021 due to the pandemic. These resumed in summer 2022.

Throughout 2021-22 Religious Education network meetings which schools can choose to attend would have included moderation of standards across year groups and schools to support schools with the judgements they make against the revised 2016 Agreed Syllabus Age Related Expectations. There were no face-to-face courses due to the residual fall out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The advisor offered to provide support information through an online virtual webinar, but no schools took up this offer.

a) Public examination entries in Religious Education (RE) and Religious Studies (RS)

In the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, legal requirements state that RE should be provided as part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils attending a maintained school, this includes High schools.

Background

At Key Stage (KS) 4 many pupils fulfil their entitlement by following as a basis an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in RS. Schools should provide reasonable time for pupils to complete this and if appropriate, to attain an external qualification.

At KS5, pupils may follow the programme of study provided within the Agreed Syllabus or an accredited specification (from a recognised examination board) in RS.

Schools that do not offer this opportunity to their students are requested to apply to the SACRE for a variation of practice.

This academic year no schools have applied for, or been granted, a variation.

Staffordshire SACRE recognises the independence of Academies and Free Schools. However, it commends the Agreed Syllabus to them as a constructive and collaborative way to meet their legal requirements in Religious Education.

Update Autumn 2021-July 2022

There were improvements to the delivery of RE and RS. Schools from the autumn term 2021 resumed offering their normal RE and RS delivery. As many spent the time during COVID-19 evaluating their planning some schools are reporting that their delivery is now improving as a result.

Also Ofsted has been monitoring RE more robustly as part of the inspection process- this has spurred schools to review and enhance their delivery of RE/RS

b) Overall GCSE results 2020-21 not just for RE

The GCSE system continues to use the new grading of 9-1, with 9 being the exceptional grade.

Historically grades were awarded following different processes in Central Assessed Grades (CAGs) and Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) during 2020 and 2021 after public exams were cancelled for all schools in the UK. This led to a large increase in the share of top grades. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer exam series for the 2020/21 academic year was cancelled. These resumed in summer 2022

In 2020/21, pupils were assessed on the content they had been taught for each course. Schools were given flexibility to decide how to assess their pupils' performance, for example, through mock exams, class tests, and non-exam assessment already completed. GCSE grades were then determined by teachers based on the range of evidence available (referred to as teacher-assessed grades, or TAGs).

This is a different process to that of 2019/20 when pupils were awarded either a centre assessment grade (known as CAGs, based on what the school or college believed the pupil would most likely have achieved had exams gone ahead) or their calculated grade using a model developed by Ofqual - whichever was the higher of the two.

The changes to the way GCSE grades have been awarded over the last two years (with CAGs and TAGs replacing exams) means that 2020/21 pupil attainment data should not be directly compared to pupil attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring year on year changes in pupil performance.

The government has announced that it would not publish school or college level results data on compare school and college performance (also commonly referred to as school and college performance tables) in autumn 2020 or autumn 2021

See below for the 2021 results

c) Religious Studies GCSE 2021

Here are the trends in the latest religious studies GCSE results for summer 2021. The proportion of grade 9 results achieved by students nationally in 2021, equivalent to a high A* under the old GCSE system, rose to 11.4 per cent, compared to 9.6 per cent in 2020 and 7.5 per cent in 2019.

Staffordshire information

We cannot report to SACRE precisely the data for our schools regarding RE and RS however the following information provided by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales and the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education gives the national picture for A-level and GCSE entries this year.

Staffordshire LA have been unable to provide a break down school by school of the RE/RS grades.

However, there are some overall figures to report for 2021

County	Number of candidates	Grade 9 and above - %	Grade 8 and above - %	Grade 7 and above - %	Grade 6 and above - %	Grade 5 and above - %	Grade 4 and above - %	Grade 3 and above - %	Grade 2 and above - %	Grade 1 and above - %
England	201975	11.4	23.8	37.7	53.2	67.5	80.2	89.9	95.7	98.9
Staffordshire	4,320	7.1	17.2	31	46.9	62.6	77.5	89.7	96.4	99.1

The number of pupils taking GCSE Religious Studies in England remained stable in 2021.

Key outcomes entries of GCSE in 2021

Staffordshire % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 was 76.4% and 77.5% in 2021 with a fall to 73.4% in 2022

England % achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2020 was 80.5% and 80.2% in 2021 with a fall to 76.7% in 2022

Therefore Staffordshire % of students achieving grades 9-4 for the full RS course in 2021 was 3% lower than the England average, this is an improvement compared to 2020 and this gap remains similar in 2022

Historically

2019 National Average 9 to 4 72.3%

2019 Staffordshire Average 9 to 65.9%

2020 National Average 9 to 4 80.5%

2020 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 76.4%

2021 National Average 9 to 4 80.2%
 2021 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 77.5%

2022 National Average 9 to 4 76.7%
 2022 Staffordshire Average 9 to 4 73.4%

d) Religious Studies A-level 2021- the only available data provided by SCC is as follows, there are no comparisons available for 2020.

A level 2021	No of pupils	% A* - E	% A*-C	% %A*-A	Average Grade
Staffordshire	53	100%	91%	26%	B
England	16.645	100%	96%	32%	B

In England the number of Religious Studies A-level exam entries in 2021 has increased 6.1 percent year on year. The subject outperformed other A-level subjects as a whole, which increased by 5.1 percent, with a greater increase than most other humanities subjects.

The 2021 Religious Studies results reverse the decline of 11.5% in 2020, where many other subjects saw significant falls in the number of entries, including Geography (down 16.2%) and History (down 15.1%). Last year's reduction reflected a smaller cohort of 18-year-olds and changes to the assessment of A level and AS examinations that had an effect in 2018, when the majority of schools changed their policies to recommending three A-levels, versus four in previous years.

The key outcomes of the 2021 A-level results in England and Wales for Religious Education are as follows:

- 16,645 RS A-level entries were recorded, an increase of 6.1 percent on 2020.
- There were 49.5 percent more entries than in 2003 (11,132 entries were recorded in 2003).
- The 6.1 percent increase in entries for RS is greater than some other subjects such as History (up 1.5 percent) and Political Studies (up 5.1 percent).
- The increase of 49.5 percent in the number of entries for RS A-level since 2003 is greater than equivalent changes over the same period for subjects such as Geography (down 0.9 percent), Law (up 9.4 percent), and History (up 8.7 percent).

The relative stability of entries suggests that candidates continue to recognise the value of RS A-level for Higher Education entry, graduate employment, and as a valuable life skill.

Religious Education and the Schools Bill (2022) Commentary from ARIEAC (for information only)

Introduction:

The requirements for the curriculum in academy schools are set out in (1) primary legislation, (2) academy funding agreements (most commonly the DfE model funding agreement) and in regulations.

1. **Primary legislation:** In the case of religious education, the primary legislation has remained largely unchanged from the 1988 Education Reform Act but this has been restated in section 375 the Education Act 1996, section 71 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and elsewhere. These pieces of legislation set out the requirements for RE in different types of school, including schools with and without a religious designation.

2. **Academy Funding agreements:** Also include statements about the curriculum requirements for RE in different types of school, based on the legislation above.

Problem One

In trying to remove barriers to academisation, the government decided to reassure providers of schools with a religious character that their right to determine their own religious education are protected, not just in the Academy Funding Agreement, but also in primary legislation. The Schools Bill was therefore drafted to include the clauses from the funding agreement that set out the requirements for RE. The problem is that only the clauses that relate to schools WITH a religious character are included in the Bill and not schools WITHOUT a religious character. This places RE in those schools on a less secure footing.

Solution One

The DfE should amend the Schools Bill to ensure RE in all types of school is protected by primary legislation, not just RE in schools with a religious character.

Problem Two

Academies are not required to follow their local Agreed Syllabus for RE. This means there is no benchmark for the expected standard of RE to which pupils are entitled. The consequences of this is that RE is often very weak in Academy Schools and there is no means to challenge this. Several test complaints have been supported by NATRE that evidence the problem.

Solution Two

If the government intends to pursue the principle of Academy Trust standards, then the following text should be included. This language mirrors the language of the Ofsted Framework for Inspection and is adapted from the example included in the DfE Academy Trust Standards Factsheet.

The nature and quality of education provided, and the curriculum followed.

These standards will ensure:

a) The curriculum up to 16 is broad and balanced, and includes English, mathematics, science and up to 18, includes religious education

b) The curriculum should be similar in breadth and ambition to the basic curriculum, which includes the national curriculum, religious education* and age-appropriate relationships and sex education