

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

14th November 2011

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People

Applications for variation of practice

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider any applications for variation of practice to religious education and or collective worship.

2 Summary

- 2.1 Upon receipt of a written application from a Headteacher of a county school SACRE should determine whether it is appropriate to disapply the requirement for broadly Christian collective worship and/or make amendments to the way the Agreed Syllabus is followed in the case of that school.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 That members of SACRE are updated on any new developments in this area.

4 Background

- 4.1 No applications have been received at this time.
- 4.2 Nationally Collective Worship has been high profile in recent months. In July Secularist Peers tabled amendments to the Education Bill, at the committee stage of the house of Lords which sort to end the statutory status of collective worship and religious education within schools without a religious designation. The amendments were debated before being withdrawn by their sponsors.
- 4.3 The RE council and NASACRE have clarified their positions on Collective worship. Statements are attached.

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 There are no immediate financial implications

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS
STATEMENT BY THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL OF ENGLAND
AND WALES
5 SEPTEMBER 2011

The Religious Education Council (REC) of England and Wales believes collective worship has played an important role in schools, following the requirements set out in 1944 (and amended in 1988). The requirements for collective worship as a school activity are both different and distinct from the requirements regarding RE in the curriculum.

The REC is aware that the requirements for collective worship are not now being followed in all schools, especially secondary schools, for a variety of reasons, including lack of suitable spaces and/or leaders for collective worship. This has been reported regularly by Ofsted over the years. However, this does not mean that schools have not provided opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of young people, many good examples of which Ofsted have also reported.

In 1998 the REC conducted, with others, a review of collective worship. The findings were reported to the government of the day, but no action followed either in terms of a governmental review or the provision of new guidance, training and resources. With an apparent lack of government interest in this area, the REC has focussed its attention over the past ten years or so on the curriculum subject of RE, which, until this year, has shown signs of improvement in many but not all areas of the country. The REC believes that, now, RE itself is in danger of government neglect.

The REC has plans to debate the issues around collective worship again in the near future, and hopes to be able to be in a position to discuss these with the government and others as appropriate.

John Keast

Chair of the RE Council of England and Wales

17.00 hours

NASACRE comment

It is impossible to give a definitive statement as to 'NASACRE's position' on specific Collective Worship issues because the organisation is so diverse; its members are the SACREs which, in themselves, would represent a range of views on such matters.

NASACRE officers and executive of the association would strongly support the view that collective worship is a valuable and unique opportunity to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, as such, deserves to be taken seriously and offered in a meaningful way. Statutorily, promoting pupils' SMSC development is still the first aim of schooling.

Where a school values these opportunities, pupils of all ages benefit enormously and the daily requirement ceases to be a chore and, therefore, an issue. It only becomes contentious where the activity is not recognised as being worthwhile and the practice consequently reflects that.

Daily CW is a duty on schools and our council's view would always be to meet the legal requirements. NASACRE would never give advice or take up a stance which contradicted the law. At most, it might relay strong views from its member SACREs.

Julie Grove
Secretary NASACRE