

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
13th May 2009
Report of the Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning)

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 spring 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. A summary is attached to this paper.

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 by individual items. These have been dealt with elsewhere, or will be raised at future meetings of SACRE.

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Frequency of subject inspections

At the spring term meeting members requested that a letter be sent to the HMI with responsibility for RE to express concern about the frequency of subject inspections within the county. A letter was sent from Bill Dewar, head of School Improvement Division, and a response was received from Alan Brine HMI. Copies of the letters are attached.

Subject inspection report, Endon High School

The sixth subject focused inspection in the county took place on the 16th and 17th March 2009. The department was judged to be good overall.

Achievement and standards, teaching and learning, leadership and management were all judged to be good, with the quality of the curriculum deemed to be satisfactory. Examination results were judged to be 'particularly impressive'. The subject leader was commended for 'excellent use of the analysis of assessment data to evaluate achievement'.

Areas for improvement were identified as:

- establishing a clearer focus on the key skills and concepts of the subject that builds upon students' prior knowledge when planning the Key Stage 3 curriculum
- ensuring that marking consistently provides precise information and advice to students about how to improve their work.

Overall the judgements on the six county schools inspected to date have been three good, two satisfactory and two inadequate. The county has been involved in work with both schools judged to be inadequate.

Reports from subject focused inspections can be read in full on the Ofsted website at

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/list

The Student Council



The summer term meeting of the Student Council was held at the Seabridge Centre on Thursday 23rd April. Attendance was a little lower than usual as many students were focused on revision for forthcoming examinations, but there was good representation from both Year 12 and Year 13. As always, Michael Metcalf's support was much appreciated, and the AST, Emma Senior also attended, offering to organise a visit to a highly regarded conference at the end of June for members. Frankie Durairatnam gave a talk on the essential aspects of the Baha'i faith and Councillors asked questions that were interesting, challenging and searching.

Minutes of Council meetings are now lodged on the Staffordshire website and can be found at <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/Curriculum/Subjectareas/ReligiousEducation/studentcouncil/>

Staffordshire SACRE web page

Further material has been added to the Staffordshire SACRE site, and members can view information, including minutes, at <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/Curriculum/Subjectareas/ReligiousEducation/SACRE/>

Monitoring of provision

At the spring term meeting members were advised of monitoring information received relating to proposed changes in provision at a school in North Staffordshire. Concern was expressed that the suggested changes may not be in keeping with arrangements outlined in the new Agreed Syllabus. Members asked that a letter be sent to the school to advise them of forthcoming changes. A letter has been sent but to date no reply has been received. A copy of the letter will be tabled at the meeting.

The SACRE Awards

This year the SACRE Awards are to be held on Thursday 2nd July. A letter will shortly be sent to schools inviting nominations in the four categories. SACRE members are cordially invited to join in the celebrations at the Seabridge Centre from 1.30 on that afternoon.

Persona Dolls

Articles of Faith has supported the offer of a range of persona dolls representing a variety of faith communities. This has been made available to all primary teachers and there has been a reasonable uptake.

2007 27/3 - 1st class

Children & Lifelong Learning Directorate

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My ref: BD/HF/2503L.02/CJC Your ref:

Date: 26th March, 2009

Dear Mr. Brine

Religious Education Survey Inspections, Staffordshire

Since May 2007 six survey inspections for religious education have taken place in Staffordshire. Schools have found the process rigorous and have appreciated the professionalism of the inspections. The judgments, ranging from inadequate to good, have been seen by the schools as fair and the even-handed approach of the inspectors has been commented upon.

As an authority we have welcomed these inspections which have helped to raise the profile of the subject with schools within the county. The letters written to schools following inspection and the development points identified have helped to clarify the standards expected for departments and senior managers. This has been very supportive for the subject within the LA.

Concern has been expressed, however, by teachers and by the SACRE, at the frequency of the inspections. Three of the six taking place in Staffordshire occurred between January 28th and March 17th 2009. In view of the fact that, when asked, HMI specified that selection for survey inspections is random, and that there are only thirty in each phase in each year it is not clear as to why Staffordshire schools have been visited on so many occasions.

Whilst on the one hand the support and guidance this provides is appreciated, the number of these particular inspections appears to have become proportionately high. We wonder if you can offer some explanation for this and we would ask that this be taken into account when schools are being chosen for subject survey inspections in RE in the future.

Yours sincerely



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06 April 2009

Mr W Dewar
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Dear Mr Dewar

Thank you for your letter of 26 March 2009 concerning RE survey inspections in Staffordshire. I am pleased to hear that these inspection visits and the subsequent letters have proved useful to your schools and to SACRE.

I can confirm that the selection of schools is done on a random basis although, in the case of RE and because of its local determination, we do seek to visit more than one school in a local authority in order to gain a broader picture of the way in which the agreed syllabus is being implemented and supported. In addition, the deployment of inspectors seeks to take into account their home location.

You are, however, right to point out that we have visited rather more schools in Staffordshire than is usual and there was an imbalance in our sample. I had identified this and have already informed our Research Division to ensure that this does not happen in the future.

Yours sincerely,

 **Alan Brine**
Subject Adviser for Religious Education