

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
18th November 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 summer 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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The Student Council for Religious Education

The late summer term meeting of the Student Council was held on June 18th 2009. The minutes of the meeting are attached below.

A new feature of the meeting was a session called 'Tell SACRE' which is set to become a standing agenda item. Students were asked to consider the viability of regular debates to inform SACRE of the students' perspective. An account of the discussion can be found in the minutes. In summary, Councillors considered this to be a useful suggestion and identified areas for future meetings, including collective worship, cross-curricular RE and trips.

What the council says about RE – comments included:

- RE deals with controversial issues. It's surprising that more people aren't interested
- There are lots of sides to it. You need to ensure that people know you don't have to be religious to do RE
- There is a need to make sure RE tackles atheism
- RE can be promoted through assemblies
- The really interesting stuff only starts at GCSE
- Year 9 students are mature enough to study some of the interesting topics such as euthanasia
- Pupils need to know what RE is all about
- It would be good to give Year 9 an introduction to philosophy
- Some do projects – across the curriculum – and teach themselves
- Newspapers – incorporating what is going on in the world
- Application of religion – how does it work in practice
- Building your own view – understanding rather than knowledge
- Thinking about the consequences of your actions
- You are asked your opinion, but not asked about other people's views
- Encourage lunch time groups led by sixth formers to help debate and discussion
- Visit to modern places of worship – a wider range of Christianity
- Religion is cool



The SACRE Awards

As ever the SACRE Awards proved to be a popular and enjoyable event. Entertainment was provided by Bonita King of Articles of Faith and Habte Wold with musicians from the Birmingham Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Community. There was a quiz, which almost everyone got right, and an excellent buffet. Members of the Student Council did their usual efficient job of making sure the proceeding ran smoothly. Certificates were awarded in all four categories – to students, teachers, schools/departments and members of the wider community.

Those gaining the special 'PRESSie' Awards were:

Student	Harriet Jackson, John Taylor High School
Teacher	Anne Steele, Endon High School; Chris Easom*, Wolstanton High School
School/Department	Yoxall, St. Peter's CE (VC) Primary School
Members of the wider community	Paul Lewis, Sydney Morris* Stoke on Trent Hebrew Congregation

* Awarded 'Super Pressies' for their outstanding contribution

The Agreed Syllabus Launch

The new Agreed Syllabus was launched very successfully on September 22nd 2009 with around 100 people attending the event. There was a very positive atmosphere, with a number of teachers expressing pride in being involved with the development of the syllabus. Copies of the document were sent to all schools immediately after the launch, along with 'Policy Guidance for Religious Education in Staffordshire: non-statutory guidance'. There has been a pleasing response, with professional development opportunities drawing good numbers on courses where the syllabus is a major feature. To support senior managers in schools, a brief summary of the key issues 'A Guide to Religious Education in Staffordshire for Headteachers and Senior Managers', was sent out in October

The SACRE Lecture

Bishop Gordon Mursell, the Bishop of Stafford, entertained, amused and challenged the audience at the Fifth Annual SACRE lecture which followed on from the syllabus launch. Whilst confessing that he was not an educationalist, the bishop hit just the right note with a thoughtful talk focusing on relevant current issues and encouraging the development of young people's moral compass. His punch line was that it mattered less where you had come from, and more where you were going to, a motto taken up by at least one school to encourage examination students.



The speaker for 2010 will be Laurie Rosenberg, a representative of the Jewish community.

Spirited Dance

Through the School Improvement Division's Study Support Programme a joint project was undertaken to explore religion and spirituality through dance. The Friary School and three partner primaries, Willows, St. Stephen's and Chadsmead, worked with a dance artist to explore Buddhist meditation, Christian Prayer, Jewish Rites of Passage, Muslim patterns, Hindu Divali and Sikh banghra dancing. Following a day of intensive work in each school and a morning of rehearsals an evening performance was given in the theatre at the Friary. The venue was packed and the children performed in an electric atmosphere. It was a moving evening for all involved, and the project exceeded expectations. Caroline Holder, School Improvement Division's Innovations Officer deserves credit for the original idea and for bringing the project to fruition. It is hoped that the success can be replicated in other schools around the county, using 'Spirited Dance' as a transition project for pupils in their final year at primary school.

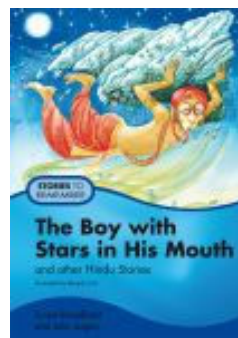
Farmington Fellows

The Staffordshire tradition of promoting Farmington fellowships continues with two further Fellows working on projects in 2009-2010. Gaye Tayler from King Edward VI School, Lichfield and Janet Young from Queen's Croft High School, Lichfield, began their Fellowships at a Conference in Oxford in July 2009. Staffordshire teachers who completed their Fellowships in 2009 were Celia Maddock from William Shrewsbury Primary School, Burton on Trent, and Ruth Parrott from Silverdale Primary School, Newcastle.



Offers; SHAP Calendar and storybooks

Teachers continue to be offered quality resources at reduced rates through bulk buying by the County. As has been the custom in recent years, the SHAP calendar has been offered to schools at a small discount, and for the second half of the autumn term a pack of five storybooks is to be offered to primary schools. The pack includes stories from the Christian, Hindu and Sikh traditions as well as two books which explore difference within faiths through the eyes of children brought up in the tradition. These offers are always well received.



Minutes of the Staffordshire Student Council for Religious Education

Date	18 th June 2009
Time	1.3 0-3.45pm
Location	Seabridge Centre

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes and matters arising
3. An update on events since the last meeting
4. Attracting new members 2009-2010
5. Elections
6. Tell SACRE
7. SACRE Awards - Student Council input
8. The Student Council Annual Report 2008 - 2009
9. Autumn term visit to a place of worship
10. Where do we go from here?

Dates of future meetings:

2nd July 2009

SACRE Awards

2 Minutes and matters arising

- Minutes of previous meeting approved.
- Apologies accepted by councillors from *Jessica George, Sian Burr, Lauren Cartwright,*

3 An update on events since the last meeting

- Emma updated the council on the London Conference situation. The trip is unfortunately no longer going ahead directly through SSCRE this year. However for those who want to go, tickets are available but will have to make their own way there. Agreed to definitely organise for next years Year 12 councillors to go.
- The visit to the Arboretum was discussed and is open to any councillors. It is to take place on the 15th July, meeting there at 1.15. Brief description of visit and place followed and councillors informed that if anyone needs transport (taxis) they are to contact Heather. Those wishing to go are to confirm their attendance with Heather via e-mail please and any needing directions or further details can e-mail Heather or Hannah.
- Council feedback on how successful they'd felt the input of different speakers had been this during the last few meetings. Ideas for next year were also discussed. Harriet proposed a Jehovah's Witness and further ideas were Mormons, Pagans, Wicca and a scientologist, of which Heather will investigate possibilities.
- The development of supporting a charity for the year was confirmed as a project to begin next year. The confirmed charity to be supported is a small personal charity, proposed by Hannah Goodwin. "The Libby Croome" charity raises money to purchase equipment, bikes etc, for disabled children and fundraising will begin next year.
- Heather informed council briefly of the recent Adult SACRE meeting, mentioning the Inter-Faith week (15th-21st October) that was discussed, among other issues and events.

4 Attracting new members 2009-2010

- The basic process of sending out invitations to schools involved will once again be done in the new academic year, and all councillors were encouraged to promote SSCRE in their schools!
- Posters created last year to be continued. The council liked the idea of continuity rather than annual change. Small changes were discussed to some posters; "in a good way" to be added to the poster reading "SSCRE messes with your head". Council had time to discuss in two groups any new poster ideas. Two very different but effective ideas emerged, and Heather to take ideas away to Rob.
- The information leaflet was also discussed and councillors proposed it should be made more into a leaflet, improving the aesthetics and increasing the colours and images on it. Again to be taken to Rob to try and improve slightly.

5 Elections

- Elections went ahead and votes were taken. Results for positions in next years council were as follows:
 - Chairperson- Hannah Goodwin
 - Vice Chair- Harriet Jackson
 - Lizz Wilkins- Secretary
- Congratulations to all who were selected and thank you to all who applied for any of the roles. There will be many opportunities for further responsibilities next year!
- Further roles were discussed briefly, and it was decided a charity secretary would be useful to manage money raised and ways of raising it. Amy Southwell offered to take up this role, many thanks to you.
- The idea of school reps for each school present at the council was also discussed. However it was agreed to not be necessary with no more than 3 students from each school attending at a time. To be considered for future years though.

6 Tell SACRE

- The general idea of "Tell SACRE" was supported. The format suggested would be a proposed subject of discussion each time. The theme of this meeting was to discuss how R.E can or should be approached in schools and how it can be made increasingly relevant.
- It was suggested to promote the idea of R.E in assemblies in general- perhaps including SSCRE.
- It was also suggested that topics such as "euthanasia" and "abortion", which many of the council felt are the "interesting" subjects should be taught, even if briefly, lower down in school, rather than just being reserved for GCSE. They felt this would firstly be beneficial to those going on to study GCSE RS, but also help to improve RE's status to students at a younger age.
- The possibility of cross-curricular schemes also discussed. Using RE in other subjects and encouraging extra-curricular activities such as debating society to utilise skills from RS was suggested.
- This raised debates about when "discussion" comes into the RS syllabus, councillors feeling that again injecting personal points of view on issues should not be reserved for just GCSE evaluations.
- The discussion inspired Heather reconsider the format of the 6th form conference. Instead Heather felt it would be extremely successful if councillors were trained in how to lead discussions or just promote RE in schools. Councillors could utilise these skills at the conference with peers and then take them back into schools to promote both religious studies and SSCRE. The council really liked the idea, and Heather took away ideas to continue that thought.

- A final proposition was regarding trips with school to places of worship.
- Many councillors felt they had been taken and had had the experience of visiting a very traditional and stereotypical church building however felt the status of R.E could be promoted, especially to non-religious students in school, if it was made compulsory for all to visit a very modern church.
- All agreed this would be successful in challenging the stereotypes of many students and hopefully increase the popularity of religious studies! Heather to take ideas away to be discussed. Thank you to the council for all your valid ideas and input.

7. SACRE awards -Student Council input

- Heather explained the general format of the SACRE awards to the year 12 students and the jobs available to councillors that would be available and needed on the day.
- Jobs will be assigned on the day and heather to send an e-mail out with any further details.

8. The Student Council Annual Report 2008-2009

- Anyone who has not already, please send your pieces for the annual report to Heather as soon as possible.
- Many thanks to those who have already contributed.

9. Autumn term visit to a place of worship

- The councillors discussed the idea of a trip for the year 12's in the autumn term, perhaps a re-visit to the Buddhist temple in Kings Bromley.
- A day in perhaps Wolverhampton or Birmingham was also proposed, where councillors could visit a multitude of places in the one day.
- An alternative to a trip out, if transport was difficult, was also suggested. Rather than having a speaker restricted to 20 minutes in the afternoon of a SSCRE meeting it was suggested that councillors could arrive earlier and have a morning with a speaker of their choice, prior to the afternoon meeting.
- All ideas were welcomed and decision to be confirmed next time.

10. Where do we go from here?

- The four year 13 councillors present shared what their hopes were for next year.
- Helena is hoping to study Geography at Lancaster University.
- Sophie R is hoping to study Philosophy and Ethics at Stafford University.
- Hannah L is hoping to study Philosophy and Theology at Durham University.
- Jess C is hoping to study Philosophy and Ethics (?) at