

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Tuesday, 20 October 2015

Additional Information

Agenda Item 4 – Chair’s Announcements – A summary of the report from Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead about Religion and Belief in Schools is attached. The SACRE will be asked to discuss the challenges for SACRE’s and the issues arising from the recommendations of the report.

Agenda Item 7 – SACRE Membership – A training presentation about SACRE’s

Agenda Item 9 – The Agreed Syllabus Review – A document about an Agreed Syllabus Conference

Contact: Stuart Figini (Telephone 01793 463612),
email: sfigini@swindon.gov.uk

A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools

CHARLES CLARKE AND LINDA WOODHEAD

The full document is available to be download here :

<http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-New-Settlement-for-Religion-and-Belief-in-schools.pdf>

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We began this pamphlet by suggesting that, seven decades after 1944, the time is overdue for a new settlement in the relationship between religion and schools. The old settlement no longer works as well as it needs to for the benefit of schools, religion and wider society.

The simple fact is that schools have changed enormously over the last 70 years, and so has religious and non-religious practice and its place in our society.

We have discussed, in some detail, the various aspects of the existing settlement as they operate today, and we have come to a judgment about areas where changes are needed, and areas where they are not, or the situation can be kept under review.

We have not addressed in any detail a number of important practical questions, such as improving teacher supply and quality, developing better course material and ensuring that all teachers are religiously literate. These are exceptionally important, but we think it will be easier to make progress once the overall legal framework is in the right place.

Our recommendations represent our personal views, formed on the basis of relevant recent research, and our respective expertise in politics and religion. We hope that they may be useful in informing a new settlement, and we conclude by listing the recommendations made in the course of the investigation above.

We recommend that:-

Act of Collective Worship

(1) The current requirement in statute for an Act of Collective Worship should be abolished, and the decision about the form and character of school assemblies should be left to the governors of individual schools. Schools should be required to set out their statement and strategy for promoting Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education, with school community assemblies as an important part of that strategy, upon which they would be inspected by OFSTED.

The government should provide non-statutory guidance to help achieve this.

Curriculum

(2) Consideration be given to using the phrase 'Religious and Moral Education' rather than 'Religious Education' in describing this part of the statutory curriculum.

(3) The Religious Education syllabus in county and voluntary controlled schools should no longer be set by a system of agreed local syllabuses, but by an agreed national syllabus which would have a similar legal status to the requirements of other subjects in the National Curriculum.

(4) The nationally-agreed syllabus would be determined by the Secretary of State in agreement with a newly created 'National Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (NASACRE)' comprising experts on religion and education, and after formal consultation and input from the relevant established professional bodies and representatives of religions, humanism and other belief systems.

This nationally-agreed syllabus should be reviewed every 5/7 years.

(5) The government discusses with the faith school providers, including

academies and free schools, the merits of voluntary-aided and foundation faith schools adopting this nationally-agreed syllabus and, on the basis of such discussions, considers legislating to require all maintained schools to adopt this syllabus.

(6) The government also discusses with faith school providers including academies and free schools, the importance of making a distinction within schools between religious instruction, formation and education, including agreement that religious instruction (even of a kind which does not include coercion, or distortion of other religions or beliefs) does not take place within the school day.

(7) In addition, the government discusses with independent schools whether they should adopt this nationally-agreed syllabus and, on the basis of such discussions, considers legislating to require all schools to adopt this syllabus.

(8) If these changes are agreed, the right of parents to withdraw their children from the Religious Education part of the curriculum should be abolished.

(9) The legal requirement for Religious Education at Key Stage 5, after the age of 16, should be removed and that, within the context of a general reform of the curriculum at Key Stage 4, consideration should be given to modifying the legal requirement for Religious Education to a wider study of religious, spiritual, moral, ethical, social, and cultural values.

(10) All faith schools, and possibly all schools in receipt of state funding, clearly advertise and explain the kind of religious (or non-religious) ethos and formation which they offer, so that prospective parents and pupils can make informed choices.

(11) The local Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

(SACREs) are given a new role which includes participating in the consultations about the content of the national RE curriculum, helping local implementation of the national RE syllabus, promoting community cohesion and educating for diversity, and advising on local availability of religious instruction.

(12) An important, though not the only, way to promote community cohesion and to counter radicalization across the school system is to make the kinds of curriculum change which we are proposing.

OFSTED should re-establish a strong inspection system to ensure that all schools, faith or not, properly fulfil their duty to promote community cohesion

Faith Schools

(13) Children of families of faith should where possible be able to attend schools of that faith, and that their current right to be given priority in the admissions process should not be removed.

(14) The churches need to make strong and continued progress in addressing the very real concerns about fairness, and that changes to the current legal position should be considered as an urgent matter if faith bodies fail to make progress in the directions which they have set for themselves. We believe that there are legitimate concerns about using regular attendance at worship as a selection criterion and we recommend that this criterion be kept under review.

Conclusion and Recommendations 65

(15) Further effort be given to developing alternative proposals for fairer admissions procedures to faith schools, procedures which balance the rights of families of faith to have their children educated in that faith with other considerations of fairness to others and serving the whole local community.

(16) The ability of faith schools to retain their own inspection process for the content of collective worship and religious formation should be reconsidered within the context of the overall changes we propose.

(17) The inspection regime for independent schools continue to be steadily tightened in the context of the curricular changes we propose.

(18) The current arrangements which enable faith schools to discriminate in their employment are kept under review, given legitimate concerns about their necessity and their effects.

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ABOUT SACRES

About SACRES
May 2015
www.nasacre.org.uk



This training presentation looks at these four questions:

- What is a SACRE?
- How is it composed?
- What is its role?
- What are the Local Authority's responsibilities?

What is a SACRE?

SACRE stands for:

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

A SACRE is part of local government.

Its main function is to advise the local authority (LA) on matters related to Religious Education and collective worship in schools.

What is a SACRE?

- In 1944, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were empowered by law to set up a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
- In 1988, the law changed and LEAs had to do so
- Today every local authority must have a SACRE and it must meet sufficient times to fulfil its statutory duties
- Most SACREs meet at least three times a year

SACREs: Statutory responsibilities

A SACRE must:

- advise the local authority (LA) on matters related to agreed syllabus religious education (RE) and
- collective worship (CW) either in response to a referral from the LA or as it sees fit
- publish an Annual Report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups
- email a copy of the Annual Report to the Secretary of State
 - these are currently being nationally collated by NASACRE

SACREs: Statutory responsibilities

A SACRE **must** also:

- meet in public, unless confidential information is to be disclosed
- make minutes of its meetings available for inspection at LA offices
- consider appeals from schools wishing to modify the legal requirement for the majority of acts of collective worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character; this procedure is called a ‘determination’ as SACRE determines whether or not to agree the appeal

SACREs: Statutory responsibilities

An effective SACRE should:

- monitor the provision and quality of agreed syllabus RE and of CW in order to provide targeted advice and support on teaching agreed syllabus RE
- advise the LA on the provision of training for teachers
- consider complaints about RE and CW referred to them by their LA
- consider whether changes need to be made to the agreed syllabus, in partnership with the LA
- offer advice to the LA in respect of the agreed syllabus and its implementation

SACREs: Statutory responsibilities

A SACRE may:

- require the LA to review its agreed syllabus
- decide to advise the LA on matters to do with RE and CW
- co-opt individuals who are not members of any of the groups, for example to provide educational expertise, the views of young people, or religious and non-religious views that reflect a diverse multi-cultural society

How is a SACRE composed?

Group A	Christian denominations other than the Church of England and other religions and their denominations, reflecting the principal religions of the area
Group B	The Church of England
Group C	Teacher and head teacher associations and often others representing education interests
Group D	The Local Authority

Representation on a SACRE

- All four groups must be represented on the SACRE.
- The number of members in each group will be determined by the individual SACRE's constitution.
- The composition of Group A should be broadly proportionate to the religions and denominations represented in the local area.

Decision making

After discussion many SACREs come to agreement about issues without the need for a vote except in very rare circumstances.

However when votes need to be taken:

- each of the four groups has equal voting rights: one vote per group
- decisions within a group about how that vote is to be cast do not require unanimity
- Each group has to regulate its own proceedings, including provision for resolving deadlock
- co-opted members do not have a vote

SACRE Annual Reports

- The Annual Report should include details of the SACRE's activities, including advice given to the LA and to schools and any monitoring that has been undertaken in the past year.
- The Report explains how the SACRE has fulfilled its responsibilities, evaluated its practice and used the resources at its disposal effectively.
- In the best practice, SACRE's work would be linked to a development plan.
- The Report can be used to publicise the work of SACRE with schools, governors, elected members and the general public.

The role of the SACRE

SACREs are responsible for oversight of religious education and collective worship in the majority of maintained schools.

The exceptions are:

- RE in voluntary aided schools where RE is determined by the governors and taught according to the school's trust deed
- collective worship in all schools with a religious character where worship can be reflective of that religious faith
- academies (even those which follow the LA agreed syllabus)

Schools and RE:

Type of school	Religious education is
Community and Voluntary controlled (VC) schools	taught according to the local authority's agreed syllabus and comes within SACRE's remit.
Voluntary aided (VA) schools	determined by the governors in accordance with the trust deed and reflects the religious character of the school.
Foundation schools with or without a religious character	taught according to the local authority's agreed syllabus.
Trust schools	taught according to the local authority's agreed syllabus.
Academies	Is part of the curriculum, but is taught according to the school's funding agreement.

Collective worship in schools

Type of school	Collective worship
Community	follows the 1996 Education Act and the majority is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
Voluntary controlled (VC) and Voluntary aided (VA) schools	reflects the Christian character of the school.
Foundation schools without a religious character	follows the 1996 Education Act and the majority is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
Academies	Collective worship is determined by the academy's funding agreement but must be every day for pupils not withdrawn in whole or in part by their parent.

Local Authority responsibilities

- ensure there is a SACRE
- ensure all four groups are represented on the SACRE
- establish an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and appoint members to it
- ensure there is an Agreed Syllabus, reviewed every five years
- ensure funds and support are in place to enable SACRE to fulfil its duties
- take note of and respond to advice from the SACRE

Local Authority responsibilities

Appointing members

It is the LA's responsibility to appoint members of the SACRE and the ASC.

The LA should:

- seek nominations from the organisations to be represented
- ensure those appointed are representative of the religion, denomination or sponsoring group in question

It is good practice for the SACRE to review its constitution periodically to ensure membership is appropriately representative and to advise the LA of any necessary amendments.

In summary

SACREs:

- are statutory bodies which all local authorities have to have and support
- are representative of the local community
- are responsible for RE and CW in most schools
- are instrumental in ensuring quality experiences for all pupils in RE and CW
- have to report annually
- have the potential to contribute to social harmony and cohesion

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Agreed Syllabus Conference

Agreed Syllabus Conference
May 2015
www.nasacre.org.uk



What is an Agreed Syllabus Conference?

An agreed syllabus conference (ASC) is a statutory body brought together in order to produce an agreed syllabus for RE. It is a separate legal body from a SACRE.

Statutory Requirements

Every LA is required to establish and support an occasional body called an agreed syllabus conference which must:

- produce and recommend to the LA an agreed syllabus for RE;
- meet in public;
- unanimously recommend a syllabus for adoption by the LA;
- include on any sub-committee at least one member of each of its constituent committees.

An Agreed Syllabus Conference:

- has the same group structure as the SACRE but these are called committees;
- is made up of representatives from the same interest groups as the SACRE, who may or may not be the same people;
- has no provision for co-opted members;
- may be chaired by an appointee of the local authority or may be permitted to choose its own Chair
- must specify what will be taught through the agreed syllabus;
- may not specify the amount of curriculum time that must be allocated to RE, but may provide an estimate of how much time their syllabus would require to help schools to plan their timetable.

The LA's responsibility to convene the ASC implies a duty to provide funds and support for its work.

Agreed Syllabus Conference

Questions which should concern an ASC include:

- How is the agreed syllabus best delivered to each age group?
- What mixture should there be of formal content, thematic work, group work, personal discovery, visits to specified buildings or events, and visitors?
- What is the relationship of RE to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and other whole-school priorities?
- What is the impact on RE of new curricular developments?
- How will local faith and belief be reflected in the locally agreed syllabus?
- What should pupils learn at each key stage?
- What should be statutory within the agreed syllabus, and what should be non-statutory guidance, to be placed in appendices?

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