

Swindon Borough Council

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Tuesday, 5 December 2017

Committee Room 6, Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon

At 6.00 p.m.

Vision Statement

Swindon SACRE Aims to:

- Enhance the quality of Religious Education and Collective Worship in Swindon Schools / Academies through supporting teachers.
- Ensure the effective management of the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other key stakeholders.
- Monitor schools' provision for RE and Collective Worship as well as the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Encourage Schools, Academies and Colleges to celebrate the religious and cultural diversity found in Swindon.

Group A: Christian Denominations and Other Religions or Religious Denominations

Jo Backus, Buddhist Community
Mr Gurchoran Singh Lyal, Sikh Community
Mr David Burbidge, Baptist Church
Reverend David Howell, Swindon Evangelical Alliance
Mr M S Khan, Muslim Community
Mr Tony McAteer, Catholic Community
Mr Dinesh Patel, Hindu Community
Michelle Howard, United Reformed Church
Vacancy – Jewish Community
Vacancy – Methodist Church

Group B: The Church of England

Reverend Clive Deverell
Miss Janet French
Reverend Norma McKemey
Ms Steph Mundin
Michelle Howard

Group C: Teacher Associations

Mrs Tracy Mason, NUT
Mrs Lottie O'Brien, NASUWT
Mrs Mandy Sandleton, NASUWT
Mrs Emma McCarthy, NUSUWT
Vacancy
Vacancy
Vacancy
Vacancy

**Group D:
The Local Authority**

Councillor Fionuala Foley
Councillor Fay Howard
Councillor Barbara Parry
Councillor Matthew Courtliff
Councillor Gary Sumner

Co-Opted:

Jo Garton, Swindon Humanists
Fidelma Meehan, Baha'i Community

Support Officers:

Peter Nathan
Katy Staples, SACRE Advisor
Sarah Foulkes, Commissioner for Education

Committee Officer: Stuart Figini (Telephone 01793 463612)

email: sfigini@swindon.gov.uk

Swindon Borough Council can be contacted at the Civic Offices, Euclid Street,
Swindon, SN1 2JH (Telephone 01793 445500)

AGENDA

1. Appointment of Chair

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

3. Apologies for Absence

4. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded that at the start of the meeting they should declare any known interests in any matter to be considered, and also during the meeting if it becomes apparent that they have an interest in the matters being discussed.

5. Public Question Time

See explanatory note below. Please phone the Committee Officer whose name and number appears at the top of this agenda if you need further guidance.

6. Chair's Announcements

7. Minutes and Matters Arising (Pages 5 - 28)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2017, and consider any matters arising.

8. Interim CoRE Report and SACRE's Response (Pages 29 - 46)

The SACRE Advisor will report on the Interim CoRE Report, this will be followed by a discussion time. SACRE members are asked to make themselves aware of the report content, so that a full discussion can take place on the main points.

9. Development Plan 2016-2018 (Pages 47 - 52)

10. Feedback from Hub Meetings (Pages 53 - 56)

11. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SACRE is on Monday 26th March 2018. Members of the SACRE are asked to suggest venues or indicate where this and future meetings of the Panel should be held.

Date of Despatch: 21 November 2017

Public Question Time - Swindon Borough Council is committed to increasing its accountability to the public and to promoting active citizenship. Up to 15 minutes will be allowed at the start of all Council meetings for questions to the Chair from members of the public about the work of the Committee (except for confidential matters and specific planning applications). Questions must be relevant, clear and concise. Because of time constraints Public Question Time is not an opportunity to make speeches or statements. Prior notice of a question to the Director of Law and Democratic Services is desirable - particularly if detailed background information is needed.

Access Arrangements – The Venue is wheelchair accessible and an infrared receiver hearing system is provided. If you would wish to attend the meeting but have any special requirement to enable you to do so please contact the Committee Clerk above, as soon as possible prior to the date of the meeting.

If you would like to receive any of the pages contained in this agenda in a larger print size please contact the Committee Officer whose name appears on the first page of this agenda.

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STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TUESDAY, 27 JUNE 2017

PRESENT:-

Group A: Christian Denominations and Other Religions or Religious Denominations	Mr David Burbidge (Baptist Church), Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical Alliance) and Mr Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community)
Group B: Church of England	Reverend Clive Deverell, Miss Janet French, Reverend Norma McKemey and Ms Steph Mundin
Group C: Teacher Organisations	Mrs Emma McCarthy
Group D: Councillors	Councillors Mrs Lottie O'Brien (Chair), Fionuala Foley, Fay Howard, Barbara Parry and Gary Sumner

Also in attendance: Peter Nathan and Katy Staples (SACRE
Advisor) Jo Garton (Swindon Humanists), Sarah
Lane-Cawte and Michelle Howard.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Matthew Courtliff, Jo Backus, Fidelma Meehan, Mr Gurchoran Singh Lyal, Mrs Tracy Mason, Mrs Mandy Sandleton, Mr M S Khan, Mr Tony McAteer, Sarah Foulkes and Councillor Matthew Courtliff

1. Appointment of Chair

Resolved - (1) That the appointment of Chair for the Municipal Year 2017/18 be deferred to the next meeting of the SACRE being held on 5th December 2017.
(2) That Lottie O'Brien be appointed as Chair for this meeting of the SACRE only.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved - That the appointment of Vice-Chair be deferred to the next meeting of the SACRE being held on 5th December 2017.

3. Welcome from Oliver Tomkins School

The Headteacher, Rhian Cockwell and Vice-Chair of Governors, Clive Deverell, welcomed the SACRE to Oliver Tomkins Infant and Junior Schools, and with reference to the role and function of SACRE, for members' information, Ms Cockwell briefly summarised the School's approach to religious education for pupils.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Gary Sumner made a personal, non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of all Agenda Items, on the grounds that his wife is a deputy head teacher of a Swindon school.

5. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

6. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2017, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

7. Development Plan - 2016-2018

The SACRE received the updated Swindon SACRE Development Plan 2016-18, which was due to be developed further taking into account the suggested vision statement and goals for Swindon SACRE.

The SACRE considered the vision statements and analysed each of the four goals in relation to (i) how the Plan works, (ii) the Plans successes, and (iii) future actions. The SACRE felt that Plan was too complex and trying to achieve too much. It was suggested that, in order for the Plan to become a workable document and to ensure that recommendations are deliverable, the number of actions under each goal should be reduced to four or five. The following issues were raised and debated by members:

- The ability to Swindonise the Goals and teaching materials to support teachers.
- Schools to focus on the areas of the curriculum in relation to Religious Education (RE) they feel comfortable delivering.
- The differences between the delivery of RE in Community Schools and Faith Schools.
- Ofsted's expectation of schools developing the whole person.
- Informing the Swindon Areas Secondary Heads (SASH) of the SACRE agenda.
- Evaluating the new Agreed Syllabus for RE.
- The lack of funds to place the Agreed Syllabus for RE on-line, along with SACRE web pages.
- Primary schools being more compliant than secondary school with collective worship.
- Available guidance documents on Collective Worship.
- Undertaking a review of the Time to Breathe document.
- Including the SACRE Terms of Reference on the agenda.

- Removing the Key Performance Indicators from the Development Plan 2016-18.
- Creating a working contact list of suitable speakers on different faiths.
- National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) guidance about the expectations placed on speakers visiting schools.
- Responding to national and local crisis and possible guidance for RE Teachers.

Resolved – (1) That the SACRE Advisor updates the draft Development Plan 2016-18, in line with members' comments during the debate of the item, as summarised above.

(2) That Jo Gorton, in her role as a Swindon Community Radio presenter, be asked to interview secondary school children about their thoughts on the New Agreed Syllabus for RE.

(3) That action A1 be removed from Goal 2.

(4) That the Time to Breathe document be further reviewed.

(5) That, in future, the SACRE Terms of Reference be included on the agenda frontsheet.

(6) That Steph Munda and Jo Gorton prepare a contact list of suitable speakers on different faiths, as a resource for RE teachers.

(7) That the SACRE Advisor prepare guidance for RE Teachers about how they best respond to national and/or local crises.

8. NASACRE AGM Report and National Developments

The SACRE considered an update report from the SACRE Advisor on a number of National Developments in relation to Religious Education, in particular feedback from the National Association of SACRE's Annual General Meeting.

The SACRE Advisor informed the SACRE of the most recent work of the Commission on Religious Education's and its request for evidence from SACRE's about observations and experiences over the years in relation to Religious Education. The SACRE Advisor provided a suggested response to the Commission, about 'Common baseline entitlement to RE' being the issue that most concerns Swindon SACRE at this time.

In supporting the draft response, the SACRE suggested that the local MP's should be contacted for comments before the response is forwarded to the Commission.

Resolved – (1) That the response prepared by the SACRE Advisor to the most recent request for evidence by the Commission on religious Education be agreed.

(2) That the two local MP's be asked to comment on the SACRE's response prior to it being forwarded to the Commission.

(3) That the SACRE Advisor seek to take appropriate steps to try and raise awareness of RE at future Swindon Association Secondary Headteachers meetings.

9. Feedback from Hub Meetings

The SACRE received an update from Emma McCarthy, Hub Leader, about the recent RE Hub meeting. The Hub Leader explained that both primary and

secondary schools attended the meeting and, although the numbers attending were less than the previous meeting, it was helpful to have a smaller group to build relationships and encourage the interaction between primary and secondary RE teachers.

10. Thanks to Sarah Lane Cawte

The Chair and SACRE Advisor, on behalf of the Swindon SACRE, thanked Sarah Lane-Cawte for chairing the SACRE over the years and for her enthusiasm, incredible energy, hard work, knowledge and expertise of both local and national religious education issues. The SACRE wished Mrs Lane-Cawte all the best for her move and new life in Sussex.

11. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE would be held on Tuesday, 5th December 2017, commencing at 6:00pm, venue to be agreed.



Stuart Figini

Committee Officer

Law and Democratic Services

Swindon Borough Council

Tel: 01793 463612

Email: sfigini@swindon.gov.uk

Web: www.swindon.gov.uk

Dear

Re. Swindon SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) sending evidence to the Commission on Religious Education.

The Commission on Religious Education has asked for evidence about the state of Religious Education in Britain. The CORE are a high-profile independent Commission with a remit to make recommendations designed to improve the quality and rigour of religious education, and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

Swindon SACRE has decided to send evidence concerning this central question:
Common baseline entitlement to RE.

This is the evidence that SACRE wishes to send, and as an MP in Swindon we want you to be aware of the picture of provision for Religious Education in Swindon Secondary Academies and we ask for your support in offering this evidence to the commission.

Currently, as the legal framework stands there is a legal requirement for all schools (and Academies) to teach RE to all pupils registered in maintained schools in England from KS1 - 5.

For sometime this has been flouted in 6th forms and the legal requirement for RE at post 16 in non religious foundation schools is probably a necessity that should be dropped from any legal expectations.

However with the introduction of the EBacc and the pressure on schools to help students achieve high standards in English and Maths and to have high achievements in the "bucket of 8" subjects as a published indicator of school success, Religious Education has suffered.

The Academic content of the new GCSE curriculum is weighty and cannot be successfully be taught in the limited time that has in the past been afforded RE when short course RE still counted as a performance indicator. Therefore RE for all at GCSE has suffered and schools have cut curriculum time and in some instances have dropped RE totally except for occasional "drop down days".

RE teachers in Secondary Schools in Swindon have reported that their curriculum has been cut and staff have lost jobs and find themselves isolated and teaching RE to the whole school with less resources.

One member of staff from Nova Hreod Academy has been asked to teach the whole year at a time : “I have been given the role of planning fortnightly drop down time (non examination) for year 10 (current year 9) next academic year. The idea is that it will be delivered to the whole of the year group for one lesson (75 minutes) a fortnight (a total of 15 across the year).

At Lydiard Park Academy the only RE specialist teacher has resigned “I am no longer head of RS. I handed in my notice as they have got rid of RE at KS4. They are going to do a unit of it in year 10 PSHE: 6, one hour lessons,(which is taught in tutor time by non-specialists). I didn’t want to be part of that so I handed in my notice as a non- violent protest!”

At Isambard Academy the school to be renamed in September 2017, as “Abbey Park School.” In partnership with the Park Academies (who also run Lydiard Park Academy) both RE teachers are actively looking for new jobs as “....in a nutshell; RE isn’t going to exist in its current format from September onwards.”

In 2015 and 2016 Swindon had the lowest levels of public examination entries for RE nationally.

Therefore as Swindon SACRE, we are hugely concerned about the entitlement to RE for KS4 pupils. Evidence is showing that several Academies or Academy chains in their struggle to deliver measurable outcomes are not meeting their legal requirement for RE or are complying in such a cursory manner that no depth of religious literacy can possibly be achieved.

We would like there to be an enforced curriculum entitlement to RE that is part of a limiting judgement in the Ofsted framework in order to pupils to be able to properly understand the religions and beliefs of modern Britain.

We would appreciate your comments on this submission to the Commission before we send it.

Please could you send any responses to Stuart Figini at the address above.

Yours sincerely,

Katy Staples

Adviser to Swindon SACRE



Stuart Figini
Committee Officer
Law and Democratic Services
Swindon Borough Council

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Swindon SACRE would like to offer the following as part of our evidence to the Commission on Religious Education. We have decided to focus on question 3 as this is the one that we think effects our schools in Swindon detrimentally the most:

3) Common baseline entitlement to RE

Currently, as the legal framework stands there is a legal requirement for all schools to teach RE to all pupils registered in maintained schools in England from KS1 - 5.

For sometime this has been flouted in 6th forms and the legal requirement for RE at post 16 in non religious foundation schools is probably a necessity that should be dropped from any legal expectations.

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Katy Staples Adviser to SACRE

Guidance for Swindon Schools from SACRE

Responding to a Terrorist Incident or National or International Atrocity

Swindon SACRE recommends the excellent guidance already exists written by the PSHE Association :

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/generic-framework-discussing-terrorist-attack>

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/discussing-terrorist-attack-children-primary>

There are also excellent assembly materials posted in response to any attack that can be used in school on this website :

For example here is the one that responded to the Manchester Bombing and is entitled “The Choice of Peace” and emphasises the positive response of people in the city after the attack.

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk/sec/2931/the-choice-of-peace-a-response-to-the-manchester-arena-attack-in-may-2017>



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Discussing a terrorist attack with children in the primary phases

Although we would normally advise that teaching and learning in PSHE education is built into a planned progressive programme, there are times when teachers may need to respond more immediately to unforeseen events, such as terrorist attacks. This guidance gives practical suggestions for ways that you can structure questioning, discussion or further learning about such events.

Introduction

When a terrorist attack occurs, children will hear about it in a number of different ways, some of which may be inaccurate, untrue, or based on rumour or speculation. Wherever they happen, events may create feelings of personal anxiety and fear that children can find hard to articulate: giving them a context to discuss, question and express their thoughts and feelings will help them to process what has happened in a safe environment with a trusted adult. One context for this discussion could be within a PSHE education lesson.

This guidance is not intended as a script or lesson plan, but to help teachers answer questions, structure discussion and, if appropriate, extend children's learning and understanding. Teachers should pick out what they feel is relevant for the nature and circumstances of an event, the age and readiness of the children, and their whole-school ethos and values.

As with the teaching of any PSHE education lesson it is essential to establish or reinforce ground rules for a discussion (for further detail, please read the relevant section in our [guidance on discussing controversial issues](#)). In addition, pastoral care, and, if necessary, safeguarding protocols should be available for any potentially vulnerable children after a discussion about an attack has taken place.

Practical tips

1. Offer reassurance

Children, especially younger ones, may be afraid that a similar attack will happen to them, or to their friends and family. It is important to reassure them from the outset of discussion that such attacks are very rare, and although it is possible, it is highly unlikely that something like this will happen to them, or to anyone they know.

2. Encourage questions and answer them honestly

Younger children are naturally curious, and may arrive in school after hearing about a terrorist event full of questions and theories about what they have seen or heard. To ignore, dismiss, or not answer these questions, or to pretend that nothing has happened, can be counter-productive. It is important to answer children's questions honestly and in an age-appropriate

way, in order to allay possible fears, but also to ensure that children are clear about separating basic facts about an event from speculation, rumour or untruths.

3. Clarify the facts

Starting a discussion about a terrorist attack could be broadly structured under three questions:

- What exactly has happened?
- What is happening now?
- How do we know?

It is important to help children separate the ‘basic facts’ that are known (‘a bomb has exploded in a city’; ‘people were injured/ killed’) from inaccurate or speculative interpretations. Make sure you are clear of the difference between factual information, speculation and rumour in your responses to their questions (and to call out absolute untruths).

You could start by giving examples of fact, speculation and rumour that might happen every day – things we know and things we can’t be sure of – before moving discussion on to what has happened. You could also help children recognise the language of fact, speculation and rumour, so they can come to a less confusing understanding about an event.

Examples of responses could include:

Factual information:

- We don’t know for sure what happened/ who did it/why they did it [yet].
- All we know for sure is [*factual, age-appropriate explanation of the attack*]
- Terrorist attacks are often confusing. It may take a long time for investigators to find out what really happened. News from sources we trust such as the BBC will report the facts when they have them.

Language: we know that...; government/the police/the BBC/a trusted source has confirmed...

Speculation:

- Speculation means putting together lots of people’s ideas or experiences of an event and making a kind of guess about what happened. The people making those guesses don’t have any more facts than we do, so their speculations might be wrong.
- Speculations can change, sometimes very quickly.
- Anyone can speculate on what happened, even if they weren’t there. You or your friends might have your own speculations, but it doesn’t mean that they are true.
- It is very hard to understand why some people do such awful things. We can speculate about why this event happened, but we cannot know for sure.
- Sometimes people make up their own speculations because they want to convince us to believe something that *they* think is true.

Language: it seems/appears...; we think...; the story we’ve put together is...; witnesses say...

Rumour:

- A rumour is a story about an event that might not be true at all – each time someone repeats it, it changes a little bit and you don’t know which bits are true, which bits are based on truth, and which are made up.

- People might read rumours on social media and spread them among their friends. Rumours can spread and change very quickly this way.
- Even if lots of people are talking about or spreading a rumour, even online, it still doesn't mean that it is true.
- It's really important to think about or check whether something is a rumour before you decide to believe it or repeat it.

Language: apparently...; I heard that...; my mum's friend's aunty says...; her dad said...; I read on Facebook...

Children of this age will still see parents, older siblings or other adult family members as sources of absolute authority. It is important to emphasise what facts are known about an attack, rather than commenting directly, on, or be seen to be judging, a 'my mum says...' -type comment.

4. Allow children to talk about their feelings

A terrorist attack can create a range of strong feelings within children, including curiosity, anxiety and fear, and even excitement. The feelings they have, and the strength of those feelings, can depend on many things, such as what they have seen or heard, from where or whom they got the information, or if they have some kind of connection – even an apparently tenuous one – to where the event took place or those involved or caught up in it.

The way that children show their feelings will also vary, with some being open about their emotions, and others appearing to ignore or 'block out' what has happened. It is important that the feelings children express are listened to and valued, but differing reactions should be respected, and appropriate 'space' offered to those who need it.

Feelings could be explored by asking questions such as the following:

- How do we feel about what has happened?
- Do we all have the same feelings about what has happened, or are our feelings different?
- What kinds of things/who might affect our feelings? (e.g. family, media, others' attitudes, values etc.)

Providing a 'Worry/Question box' is a good way for children to ask questions anonymously, or submit questions which might come up for them later on, and it can also help you to prepare answers to tricky or sensitive questions ahead of discussion in a PSHE lesson.

5. Encourage community cohesion

Some children may express divisive feelings such as blame – not just of the perpetrator(s) of the terrorist act, but of the group or community from which they came, or on whose behalf they claimed to act. There may also be children in the class and/or school from these groups who might be afraid of others' reactions towards them. It is vital to reassure any children from particular faith or community groups that they are a valued and important part of the school community, and to remind all children of the school's attitude towards behaviours such as bullying or racism.

You can challenge divisive thinking by helping children to recognise the dangers of stereotyping whole groups based on the actions of a small number of individuals – this discussion could be included within a wider PSHE context looking at issues of diversity, community and stereotyping.

Examples of questions for discussion could include:

- Might this event make some people feel differently about a particular country/faith/certain groups of people/a community?
- Do all the people in that country/faith/ group/community believe that what this person did was right?
- Do all the people in that country/faith/ group/community have the same opinions or believe the same things as the person who carried out the terrorist attack?
- Are there any people in our community who may be feeling afraid or anxious at the moment?
- What can we do to make sure that everyone in our school community feels supported and safe?
- How can we help our community stay strong together?

Other things your school can do

- Signpost sources of support, including staff within school who are available if children have further questions or worries.
- Some schools might find a form of reflection helpful (it can, but doesn't need to be religious). This could include:
 - a minute's silence or similar reflective time in a whole-school assembly or within class at the same time in the day (this could tie in with any national 'official' silences)
 - lighting a candle, playing gentle music or writing prayers/non-religious reflections with which to start an assembly
 - creating a remembrance book, or a school display
 - holding a fundraising event for a relevant charity.

Remember that it is also important that members of staff who are leading discussions or activities related to a terrorist attack are given opportunities to 'offload', or talk with one another, perhaps in a staff meeting or similar about the questions children have asked and any issues raised. Staff may be trying to answer questions or deal with anxieties that they themselves may have, albeit at a different level, and they should be offered opportunities to share thoughts and offer or receive support if they need it.

A generic framework for discussing a terrorist attack

PSHE Association July 2016

Introduction

Whilst we would normally advise that all learning in PSHE education is built into a planned progressive programme, there are times when we may need to respond immediately to unforeseen events, such as terrorist attacks. When terrorist attacks occur, young people may wish to talk about them and the context for this discussion may be in PSHE education lessons. It is impossible to create a 'one size fits all' lesson plan that will be appropriate for all such events but the questions below may be helpful in structuring discussion.

The following questions are not intended to be a script but rather should be seen as a bank of possible openings for discussion and you should select those that feel most relevant for the nature and circumstances of the event and the age and readiness of your pupils. There is a 'vocabulary' for deconstructing these events which provides an opportunity to explore such events with young people (see italicised words below).

Terrorist attacks can create a variety of strong feelings, including curiosity, excitement, anxiety or fear. Although actual events may be geographically distant they may create feelings of personal anxiety and we explore this below.

To pretend nothing has happened can be counter-productive. Many young people will want to discuss events and providing opportunities to process what has happened in the safety of a classroom can help them refocus on their other learning.

This may not be true of all young people. Some, perhaps those that have a strong emotional connection to events may initially wish to ignore or 'block out' what has happened and this should be respected. It is possible they may wish or will feel ready to discuss it at a later time and should be offered appropriate 'space'.

Young people can show their distress in a variety of ways, not all being obvious. Pastoral care, and if necessary safeguarding protocols, should be available for any vulnerable children or young people.

Although many of the questions below are applicable to any event, there is an emphasis on questions that relate to a deliberate incident such as a terrorist act. These acts may be especially difficult for young people to comprehend and may generate considerable anxiety.

The aftermath of these events can bring out both positive and negative responses in human beings. Education is central to enhancing the first and challenging the second. As with the teaching of any PSHE education lesson it is essential to establish or reinforce ground rules for any discussion (for further detail, please read the relevant section in our [guidance on discussing controversial issues](#)). It is essential that no child, young person or group of young people feel isolated or that they have to 'defend their community or faith'.

Deconstructing events

Learning can be organised under some broad questions offering students an opportunity to explore:

- What exactly has happened?
- What is happening now?
- What could happen next?

It is possible to explore the questions below simply through discussion however this relies on pupils' existing recollections and interpretations of events. It can be helpful to make use of material such as carefully selected newspaper articles or images from the media to help stimulate and focus discussion. For example placing different images or articles on different tables and asking groups to circulate, responding perhaps by building a collective mind-map recording their thoughts, questions or messages before using their work to open a wider discussion.

It is important that young people can separate the 'basic facts' that may be clear (for example 'a bomb has exploded in a city') from inaccurate interpretations. Exploring the difference between factual information, speculation and rumour is helpful in this respect.

- *Factual information*

Terrorist attacks are often confusing. It may take time for the people involved to investigate, analyse and conclude exactly what has happened. Factual information is usually *corroborated* or *confirmed* by a number of credible sources rather than just one.

- *Speculation*

The factual information available following an event may be very limited. This may therefore be supplemented by inputs from a variety of professionals and perhaps witnesses who try to interpret what has happened. At this stage they may have no more information than we have so their initial speculations may be wrong. It is important to ask if their speculations are '*valid*', do the facts support them; could the facts support different *interpretations*?

There may be individuals or groups seeking to capitalise on these events for their own benefit. It is important for young people to recognise this behaviour. They should ask whether a source of any speculation is using this opportunity to promote or convince the audience of the validity of their own beliefs or further their cause.

- *Rumour*

The stories that circulate after such an event that may or may not have any foundation in truth.

Social media now offers a platform for factual information, speculation and rumour and it is essential that young people can recognise the differences between them. Critically, young people need to understand that the number of people (even if they include their friends) who support a rumour does not make it 'true'. The 'Chinese Whispers' effect of social media may encourage highly misleading rumours to circulate.

These may develop into '*conspiracy theories*' where collective imaginations start to construct increasingly unrealistic but often quite seductive explanations for events. It is therefore important to check out if any *facts* support a rumour, if we have *all* the facts and if there are different interpretations of these facts.

Our capacity as a species to see patterns and make connections is fundamental to what makes us intelligent, but it is also a vulnerability. At times of anxiety people look for meaning; there is a danger that people make inappropriate connections and may use limited facts to justify their conclusions.

Since these events are likely to generate strong feelings, ask students to question:

- What do I think and feel about what has happened, is happening and might happen next? What do others think and feel?

Questions to help explore initial feelings

Feelings could be explored by asking the class the following questions:

- How do we feel about what has happened?
- Are these feelings appropriate – is it 'okay' to feel like this?
- Do we need to 'put on hold' or challenge any of our immediate feelings?

For example, feeling *empathy* for any casualties and their families or *anger* about the actions or behaviour of the perpetrators may be entirely appropriate. We may feel the impulse to *blame* someone; the following questions can help explore this:

- Are these events causing us (or encouraging us) to feel differently about a group of people or community?
- Are we in danger of '*generalising*' the actions of a few to a larger group or community?
- Is there any *actual* connection between what has happened and these communities and if there is, is it meaningful?

When encouraging young people to reflect on their own feelings and to check out their factual basis, it may be helpful to reference the Oslo attacks in 2011. In the immediate aftermath, it was evident there had been a bomb in the city but many observers incorrectly concluded that it was an attack by Islamist extremists when in fact it soon transpired that the attacker was a far-right extremist.

When discussing the dangers of generalising, it is worth citing examples where it is clear that perpetrators of acts of violence do not have the backing of their entire community, faith or cause. In the case of the murder of Lee Rigby, one of the killers broadcast on social media within minutes of the attack referring to himself as a 'soldier of Allah'. However Farooq Murad, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain, called the murder a "barbaric act" and said that Muslim communities were "united in their condemnation of this crime". He added that "this was a dishonourable act and no cause justifies cold-blooded murder."

In both of these examples, critical thinking needs to be employed not only on the facts of the event and who was responsible but also on the subversion of a faith or a cause and the danger of stereotyping whole groups based on the behaviour of a small number of individuals. It is worth noting that to do so may further serve rather than challenge the perpetrators' agenda.

This can be confusing for young people if an attack is carried out in the name of their faith or a cause they may support. It is important in such circumstances to be clear that one can have such feelings whilst still strongly disagreeing with the actions the perpetrators have undertaken.

Exploring the feelings of others

Exploring the following questions can be an important follow up discussion.

- How do other people appear to be feeling – locally or nationally - through the media?
- What are they saying, suggesting or doing and how do we feel about this?
- Do we think this is appropriate or inappropriate? Why?
- If we think it is inappropriate how might we safely challenge it?

One of the goals of terrorists can be to separate communities. Sharing feelings can offer great source of comfort and cohesion. It can unite a school, local or national community against those individuals who claim they act in the name of and with the backing of those communities. They can help to confirm that the vast majority of individuals share the same values and abhorrence for the actions and behaviour of the perpetrators.

Feelings, especially expressed through ‘blame’ can be divisive and young people need the space to consider how the negative feelings of others in a community can become ‘contagious’, especially if a number of people have the same strong feelings which focus on ‘people to blame’.

Young people could consider how the strongly held opinions of large numbers of people can begin to have an apparent ‘validity’ simply through strength of numbers. This can be amplified through social media. It is vitally important that young people explore why this is potentially dangerous and recognise that strength of opinion does not necessarily equate with reasoned argument. It is important that young people have the opportunity to reflect on the factual evidence they have gathered and use this to evaluate its ‘validity’.

With this in mind, it is helpful to explore:

- Are there any individuals or groups who may be feel vulnerable at the moment?
- How can we support them?
- What activities can we undertake to prevent terrorist attacks from dividing our community?
- How can we create a community that reduces the risks of such attacks from occurring? (For example how can we develop greater tolerance and mutual respect?)

Follow up

It can take time for people to process these types of events. For this reason it is worth offering opportunities for follow up discussions if they are felt to be needed, for example by providing a question box for pupils to leave questions that may occur to them over time and signposting sources of support.

A terrorist incident, especially one that feels ‘local’ or one to which we feel a ‘connection’, can have lasting impact on individuals and communities. Schools, through their PSHE education programme and their wider curriculum can provide a forum to support community cohesion and perhaps, even if only in a small way, help to limit the damage inflicted by such an event.

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The Choice of Peace: a Response to the Manchester Arena Attack in May 2017

Responding to terrorism

by Claire Law (adapted from 'Choosing Peace', originally published in March 2017)

Suitable for Whole School (Sec)

Aims

To reflect upon the recent terrorist attack in Manchester and to consider how choosing peace can be a positive response.

Preparation and materials

- You will need the PowerPoint slides that accompany this assembly ([The Choice of Peace](#)) and the means to display them.
- Optional: you may wish to use reflective music as the students enter and leave.

Assembly

1. *Show Slide 1.*

Today, we are going to reflect upon the recent terrorist attack in Manchester.

2. *Show Slide 2.*

On Monday 22 May, a man entered the Manchester Arena at the end of a concert by US singer, Ariana Grande, and detonated an explosive device. Although the full details have not yet been released, it has been confirmed that 22 people have been killed and many others injured. The Prime Minister, Theresa May, has condemned what she described as ‘an appalling terrorist attack’ and campaigning for the general election has been suspended.

3. For many people, the question that is being asked is, ‘Why?’ Why would anyone seek to cause such destruction, hurt and fear at a concert where many children would be present?

The newspapers, news bulletins and social media are full of reports covering the attack. Many people turn to these to help them make sense of what has happened in the hope that they can begin to answer some of the ‘why’ questions.

Unfortunately, however, the ‘why’ questions are complex and difficult to answer. Immediately after an attack such as this, it is important to reflect not only on the ‘why’ questions, but also on the ‘what next’ questions. What is the correct response to such an event? What are we to do? What are we to think? What are we to feel?

4. *Show Slide 3.*

By definition, terrorism is an act that is designed to make people feel terror, to feel scared. A terrorist act uses violence or force to bring this about.

It may feel that we have no choice after such a terrible event other than feeling afraid and worried. But we do, we always have a choice! We can choose not to allow fear and terror to define us or our responses. We can choose to work towards a society where we act with tolerance, compassion and love for others. Such a choice requires great courage. However, it is vital that we consider whether we might choose to respond in this way and how we can practically achieve this.

5. *Show Slide 4.*

In November 2015, after the terrorist attacks in Paris, people of many different races,

religions and backgrounds queued together to donate blood to help the victims who were wounded in the attack. This might seem like a small act, but, by coming together and chatting to others as they queued, these people showed that community was stronger than terror.

The day after the Paris attacks, the Catholic Archbishop of Paris, André Vingt-Trois, prayed for ‘the grace of a firm heart, without hatred.’ In a simple way, he was calling for people to choose a path other than hatred. In doing so, he urged people to choose love, peace and tolerance.

6. *Show Slide 5.*

Following the Manchester attacks, world leaders have been quick to respond with messages of support. Here are just a few of them.

Show Slide 6.

- From the Prime Minister of **Canada**, Justin Trudeau: ‘Canadians are shocked by the news of the horrific attack in Manchester tonight. Please keep the victims and their families in your thoughts.’
- From the Prime Minister of **Australia**, Malcolm Turnbull: ‘Our heartfelt sympathy and resolute solidarity is with the people of the United Kingdom.’
- From the newly elected President of **France**, Emmanuel Macron: ‘We come together in the fight against terrorism.’
- The Chancellor of **Germany**, Angela Merkel, expressed her ‘sorrow and horror’.
- From the President of **China**, Xi Jinping: ‘The Chinese people and British people are standing side by side firmly during this difficult time.’

7. At a time like this, it is important that people across the world stand together and support one another. However, it is also important that we decide in our own minds what our individual reactions to these situations are.

Time for reflection

So, what does all this mean for us? What practical things can we choose to do as a response? How can we choose to work towards a society where we act with tolerance, compassion and love for others?

Here are some practical suggestions and pointers to help us in our reflections today. We will pause after each point to give ourselves space and time to reflect and consider how we might put each point into practice.

- Today, when we feel anger or hatred towards another person, let’s stop and mentally count to ten. By giving ourselves this brief space and time, we have the chance to reflect upon whether acting on our anger will help or hinder peace. We are giving ourselves space to choose how we react.

What difference might that make for us?

Pause to allow time for thought.

- When we wake up each morning, maybe we could get into the habit of saying a simple statement or mantra that shows our intention to work courageously towards peace, rather than hatred. For example, we could say - silently or out loud - 'Today, I choose peace.'

What difference might that make for us?

Pause to allow time for thought.

- We often fear the unknown. We may feel threatened by people who are different from us or whose way of life or culture we don't understand. Can we commit to making a special effort to choose to speak to someone today whom we have never spoken to before? Or could we choose to find out something about a country, culture or religion that is different from our own? With knowledge comes an understanding that although humans may be different, they share much in common.

What difference might this information or contact with another person make for us?

Pause to allow time for thought.

- Watching the news reports, reading the headlines and following media coverage after a terrorist attack can feed our 'need to know'. But there is also a danger that repeated viewing of headlines can lead to increased fear and panic. Panicky stories spur the release of the hormone, cortisol, in our brains. Our bodies find themselves in a state of stress and fear, with the possible side effects of anger and aggression. We can choose to turn off the news headlines when we have sufficient information. Instead, we can choose to read, think or connect with stories of hope, love, compassion and tolerance.

What difference might it make for us to choose to limit our exposure to news stories about terror? What or who can we choose to listen to instead?

Pause to allow time for thought.

Show Slide 7 as the following prayer is being read.

Prayer

Dear God,

Please be with those who have been injured and hurt by the recent terrorist attack in Manchester.

Please be close to the families and friends of those who have been killed or hurt.

Upsetting events, hurt and destruction in our world cause us to ask, 'Why?'

We pray today that we have the courage to ask ourselves, 'What next?'

We ask that you guide us with wisdom, compassion and tolerance to work for a world in which peace reigns.

Peace among nations, peace among people and peace within our own hearts and communities.

Give us the strength to choose practical actions and ways of thinking that help us to act in a loving way.

Help us to shun the path of fear, anger and aggression. Lead us towards love, hope and solidarity.

Amen.

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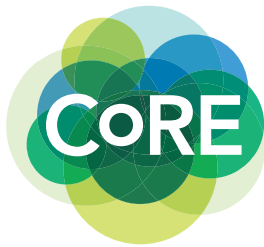


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Commission on
Religious Education

INTERIM REPORT **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ALL

SEPTEMBER 2017



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This interim report is published with the intention of creating an opportunity for as many people and organisations as possible to engage with the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) about our developing thoughts on RE in schools in England. The interim report explores a number of issues which have emerged during our deliberations on the evidence presented to us during the initial consultation, at the evidence gathering sessions held around the country and in written submissions received during the 2016/17 academic year. It sets out initial recommendations alongside a range of issues on which we are seeking to consult further before drawing any conclusions. We hope that there will be a full and vigorous consultation on the content of this interim report, and that this will help to inform the final report of the Commission, due to be published in 2018.

RE remains a vital academic subject for education in the 21st century. Studying RE gives young people the knowledge, understanding and motivation they need to understand important aspects of human experience, including the religious, spiritual, and moral. It gives insights into the arts, literature, history, and contemporary local and global social and political issues. It provides them with a space in the curriculum to reflect on their own worldview and to engage with others whose worldview may be different. The young people that we have spoken to have told us that RE enables them to have better friendships and to develop greater respect and empathy for others. RE is highly valued by many employers, who increasingly understand that in a globalised world, understanding others' worldviews and their impact on people's lives is essential to success.

The knowledge gained through studying RE is central to good local, national and global citizenship. It enables young people to have a nuanced and informed understanding of key political and social issues that they will need to face as they grow up in an increasingly globalised world. RE helps pupils to deal positively with controversial issues, to manage strongly held differences of belief, and to challenge stereotypes.

As local and global demographics have changed, including patterns of affiliation to religious and non-religious worldviews, today's students will encounter people with a much more diverse range of beliefs, lifestyles and backgrounds than did the previous generations. Understanding religious and non-religious worldviews, and their impact on individuals, communities and wider society, has never been more essential to good citizenship than it is now. For these reasons, we argue throughout the report that all pupils, regardless of background or the type of school they attend, are entitled to high quality RE which enables them to develop the nuanced and informed

understanding of worldviews that they will need as citizens.

We were impressed by the evidence of high quality and innovative approaches to RE that were presented during our consultations.¹ At its best, the subject offers great educational benefit for pupils and the British model of RE is highly regarded and has earned international esteem. Of particular note has been the appearance in recent years of local and national support networks for teachers and also the high level of examination entry at GCSE and A level.

Having said that, we are unanimous in the view that RE faces a perilous future without strategic, urgent intervention. Examination entries fell for the first time in 2017, and many who gave evidence saw this as a sign of further decline in years to come. Amongst the many challenges the subject faces, the following are identified as particularly significant:

- The changed patterns of religious and non-religious belief from the time when the current system was enacted in 1944 present a requirement to ensure that RE's structures reflect the realities of contemporary society. The religious landscape in the UK has diversified with fewer people identifying as Anglican and more identifying with other Christian denominations or other religious traditions. Moreover, the number of people identifying as non-religious has increased: in 2017, 53% of the population described themselves as not having a religion.² The global religious landscape has also been undergoing rapid change, where religion is highly significant in many societies.
- There is inconsistency in the quality and provision of RE, with increasing numbers of schools not even meeting the basic legal requirement. Pupils are experiencing a lottery in their access to high quality RE. Evidence presented to the Commission made clear the impact that the type of school had on the extent to which RE is provided: while 6.5% of schools that follow an RE curriculum determined by their religious character devote no part of their curriculum time to RE at key stage 4, the figure is 20.7% for schools required to follow a locally agreed syllabus for RE and 43.7% for academies without a religious character.³ This inequality of provision means that many children are being disadvantaged by being denied RE.
- As more schools become academies, leaving ever fewer under local authority control, the current framework of determination of RE via local authorities and agreed syllabuses is ceasing to be fit for purpose. A decrease in local authority funding has exacerbated this problem.

¹ Please see Appendix 1: Evidence received by the Commission for details of how we collected evidence.

² NATCEN (2017). *British Social Attitudes Survey*.
<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/1469605/BSA-religion.pdf>

³ RE Council & National Association of Teachers of RE (2017, forthcoming). *The State of the Nation*.

Moreover, evidence submitted to the Commission makes clear that the current approach of relying on the requirements of academy funding agreements is not sufficient for ensuring the proper provision of RE across all academies. If no action is taken, there is a serious risk of increasing numbers of pupils leaving school with an inadequate level of knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews at precisely the time when such understanding is becoming more important.

- RE has suffered from a policy environment that has not encouraged headteachers to regard it as a high-status subject. This environment includes insufficient processes to hold schools to account for their provision of RE and the omission of RE from key performance indicators published by DfE.
- There has been diminishing access to adequate training and support for teachers. This is particularly acute at primary level where the Commission heard that on average a primary trainee receives less than three hours of RE-specific training during a one-year PGCE or School Direct course.⁴
- The quality of RE is variable across schools. Low standards predominate across too many schools, including schools with and without a religious

character. Teachers are not always clear on the purpose of the subject and many lack the subject knowledge necessary to teach about sensitive and crucial issues with skill and nuance. Locally agreed syllabuses are also variable in quality. One

We are advocating RE for all not because children belong to religious traditions or not, but because in our age a nuanced understanding of the role of worldviews must be a part of citizens' intellectual make-up

issue that we have noted is the fact that religion is often presented in an essentialist mode that fails to help pupils understand the complexity, diversity and historicity of religious ideas, institutions and practices. This was most often mentioned in relation to the Dharmic traditions (i.e. Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh traditions) in the written and oral evidence but affects the presentation of all religions and worldviews in resources and in the classroom.

The Commissioners have therefore made initial recommendations in four areas:

4 Fiona Moss, oral evidence submitted to the Commission. See also NATRE (2016). *An analysis of the provision for RE in primary schools*. www.natre.org.uk%2Fuploads%2FAdditional%2520Documents%2FNATRE%2520Primary%2520Survey%25202016%2520final.docx&usg=AFQjCNFDWLUicovE8LOQEgZiiuHF7fFcAA

1. **A national entitlement for RE.** This would set out clearly the aims and purpose(s) of RE and what pupils should experience in the course of their study of the subject. This national entitlement should be for all pupils at all state-funded schools and we seek to consult with independent schools about whether they should adopt it. We are advocating RE for all not because children belong to religious traditions or not, but because in our age a nuanced understanding of the role of worldviews must be a part of citizens' intellectual make-up. It is to do with their ability to function effectively as citizens and as human beings. This is as important an aspect of education for pupils in schools of a religious character as it is in those without a religious character. It should be introduced through non-statutory guidance as early as possible with a view to it ultimately becoming statutory, either to supplement or replace the current legislation on agreed syllabuses. This national entitlement provides a reinvigorated vision for RE for all pupils in the future, drawing on the very best of the RE that we know happens in some schools. It seeks to be a basic statement of what all pupils are entitled to, but is not a national syllabus or curriculum. We hope that the flexibility of the proposed national entitlement will ensure that a diversity of high quality approaches will emerge and that this will best suit the landscape of a school-led system. We recognise that schools will need guidance and support to translate this entitlement into curriculum planning and we are reviewing where this guidance and support should come from.
2. **Holding schools to account for the provision and quality of RE.** The evidence presented to us indicates that at present too many schools are not being held to account for failing to provide adequate RE. Schools should be required to publish details on their website of how they meet the national entitlement for RE. Inspection frameworks should be revised to ensure that inspectors monitor whether schools meet the national entitlement for RE. The Commission has also given thought to how schools should provide for those Key Stage 4 pupils who are not taking the GCSE in Religious Studies and would like to consult on the possibility of a revised qualification for these pupils to ensure that their work can be accredited.
3. **A National Plan to improve teaching and learning in RE.** The Commission would like to develop a National Plan for developing teaching and learning in RE, along the lines of the National Plan for Music Education. The National Plan will bring together the Commission's recommendations for improving teacher subject knowledge and confidence and we seek to consult on how this can best be achieved.
4. **A renewed and expanded role for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs).** The evidence we have received suggests that SACREs can have an important role in promoting and supporting RE and in promoting good community relations more broadly, but that their capacity to deliver this role fully has been diminishing in many local authorities. The Commission's suggested recommendations, which are

consultative at this stage, call for consideration to be given to adding the promotion of improved community relations to the remit of SACREs and make proposals for the securing of resources for their work. There are also recommendations that seek consideration of the composition of SACREs with a call to ensure that they are fully representative, with representatives of non-religious worldviews as full members.

The full recommendations are set out on pages 8 to 12.

In addition, the Commissioners are seeking to undertake further consultation in these areas and have set out the issues that they are particularly interested in exploring. These areas for consultation are set out on pages 12 to 14.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- a. There should be a national entitlement statement for RE which sets out clearly the aims and purpose of RE and what pupils should experience in the course of their study of the subject. A draft statement for consultation is overleaf.
- b. This entitlement should become normative through non-statutory guidance as early as possible, and should ultimately become statutory, either to supplement or to replace current legislation on agreed syllabuses.
- c. The national entitlement should apply to all state-funded schools including academies, free schools and schools of a religious character.
- d. Independent schools should consider adopting the entitlement as an undertaking of good practice.

The National Entitlement for Religious Education

Overleaf is the draft text of the proposed national entitlement for RE. This draft is for consultation. We welcome comments on and refinements to the text.

A National Entitlement for RE

RE in schools should enable students to engage in an intelligent and informed way with the ideas, practices and contemporary manifestations of a diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews. It should enable them to understand how worldviews are inextricably woven into, influence and are influenced by, all dimensions of human experience. It should prepare pupils for life in modern Britain by enabling them to engage respectfully with people with worldviews different from their own. RE should equip pupils to develop their own beliefs, practices, values and identity in the light of their reflections on the worldviews they have studied.

Through their study of worldviews, pupils should develop a lifelong motivation to enquire into questions of meaning and purpose, and investigate others' worldviews and what they mean for individuals, communities and society. All of this will enable them to become responsible citizens and members of diverse and changing local, national and global communities.

Throughout their period of compulsory schooling, pupils should learn about, understand and engage with:

- a. The diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews and ways of life that exist locally, nationally and globally.
- b. The ways in which communities and individuals holding different worldviews interact, change and maintain continuity in different times and contexts and as the surrounding culture changes.
- c. The different ways that people interpret and respond to texts and other sources of authority.
- d. The ways that people communicate their beliefs, experiences, values and identities through verbal and non-verbal means (eg prose, story, poetry, art, music, dance, ritual, architecture).
- e. How people seek moral guidance from religious and non-religious worldviews and how they interpret this guidance in their lives.
- f. The importance of experience, including extra-ordinary experiences, in shaping people's worldviews and how worldviews are used to interpret experience.

- g. The role of religious and non-religious rituals and practices in both creating and expressing experience, beliefs, values and commitments.
- h. The relationship between people's worldview and their thinking and actions concerning political, public, social and cultural life.
- i. Both the positive and negative exercise of power and influence resulting from people's worldviews.
- j. The important role that worldviews play in providing people with a way of making sense of their lives and in forming their identity.*

As part of a balanced programme aimed at meeting this provision, it is expected that pupils will:

- 1. Experience meeting and visiting people from their local community from a range of worldviews including those different from their own and that of the school.
- 2. Develop core skills for researching the beliefs, values and practices of individuals and groups in society.
- 3. Experience a range of approaches to the study of religions (e.g. phenomenology, philosophy, sociology, textual studies, theology).
- 4. Engage with questions of meaning and purpose and of the nature of reality raised by the worldviews that they study.
- 5. Think through and develop a reflective approach to their own personal responses and developing identity and learn to articulate these clearly and coherently while respecting the right of others to differ.
- 6. Develop the core skills and dispositions of careful listening, critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy and open-mindedness required for making wise judgments.
- 7. Learn to discuss controversial issues and work with others (including those that they disagree with) with the intention of securing a healthy and peaceful society in the context of significant diversity.

** We are indebted to Barbara Wintersgill, who presented her project on Big Ideas in RE. Her work has informed much of the content of this list.*

HOLDING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE PROVISION AND QUALITY OF RE

- a. Schools should be required to publish on their website details of how they meet the national entitlement for RE.
- b. Inspection frameworks should be revised to ensure that inspectors monitor whether or not schools meet the national entitlement for RE, in the light of schools' duty to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- c. The DfE should either monitor, or give SACREs or other approved bodies the power and resources to monitor, the provision and quality of RE in all schools, including free schools, academies and schools of a religious character.
- d. The government should consider the impact of school performance measures, including the exclusion of RS GCSE from the EBacc, on GCSE entries and on the provision and quality of RE, and consider reviewing performance measures in the light of the evidence.

A RENEWED AND EXPANDED ROLE FOR SACRES

We seek to consult on all our recommendations relating to SACREs. (See page 12)

A NATIONAL PLAN FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RE

We are considering developing a National Plan for developing teaching and learning in RE, along the lines of the National Plan for Music Education. This plan is likely to include the following recommendations:

- a. A minimum of 12 hours should be devoted to RE in all primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses.
- b. Leading primary schools for RE should be identified and all primary trainees should be given the opportunity to observe RE teaching in such a school.
- c. Include under the Teachers' Standards, part 1, section 3 (Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge), the requirement that teachers 'demonstrate a good understanding of and take responsibility for the sensitive handling of controversial issues, including thoughtful discussion of religious and non-religious worldviews where necessary.'
- d. Restore funded Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses for those applying to teach RE and for serving teachers of RE without a relevant post A-level qualification in the subject.
- e. Restore parity of bursaries for RE with those for other shortage subjects.

- f. The government and relevant funding bodies should consider how funding of grassroots teacher networks can be made more sustainable.
- g. SACREs and local authorities should review existing good practice in developing and sustaining these grassroots networks and start their own if such a network does not exist in their local area.
- h. University performance measures should be updated to credit universities for their engagement with schools, including the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) and resource materials.
- i. University staff conducting research in areas related to RE should be encouraged to contribute to grassroots networks, lead teacher development days, develop resource materials or become SACRE members. This may provide opportunities for them to demonstrate the impact of their research or increase student recruitment.

LIST OF AREAS FOR CONSULTATION

A NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1. The entitlement is not a national syllabus or curriculum. It is a basic statement of what all pupils are entitled to, whatever type of school they attend. Many schools will need guidance and support to translate this entitlement into curriculum planning, particularly in relation to progression. We are still reviewing where this guidance and support will come from. We seek input on what bodies would be best placed to translate the entitlement into detailed programmes of study and how best to support schools to plan their curriculum in line with the entitlement. Several possibilities have been discussed by the Commission so far:
 - a. Removing the requirement for local authorities to hold Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASCs). In a context where every school will eventually become an academy, this requirement is no longer proportionate for many local authorities and will become even less so over time. However, it might be possible for programmes of study to be developed at regional levels. It would also be possible to include regional universities on this model. A regional system might not provide sufficient support to academies unless they were explicitly included. If the requirement for local authorities to develop a locally agreed syllabus were to be removed, it would not preclude those local authorities that had the resource and expertise from convening ASCs and developing programmes of study that could be adopted by those schools that chose to, within or outside that local authority.
 - b. Recommending the development of a national set of programmes of study compliant with the entitlement. This may or may not be government-funded. This has the advantage of providing consistency

across localities, which was requested by some teachers in the written and oral evidence. However, there are a number of potential difficulties with it. First, there is the vexed question of who develops programmes of study. Second, there is the justified criticism that in the era of a school-led system a nationally agreed set of programmes of study is too rigid and leaves schools insufficient freedom to undertake RE that is appropriate for their pupils and immediate community. Third, there is the question of how to ensure that the syllabus is appropriately independent of political interference. Many of those who gave oral and written evidence were concerned about excessive political interference in the scope and content of RE.

- c. Leaving the market open for schools, groups of schools, dioceses, SACREs, commercial providers and other relevant groups to write their own programmes of study. This would allow maximum freedom for schools but might not resolve the inequality in provision and quality discussed above. Non-statutory guidance or a range of model programmes of study might also be developed to support relevant groups in writing their own programmes of study.
2. There is likely to be a range of possibilities within these broad categories and other possibilities that we have not yet considered. We seek views on what would be most helpful to support schools with curriculum planning and ensure that all schools can meet the entitlement effectively.
 3. The question also remains as to whether the entitlement statement should replace or supplement the current legislation on agreed syllabuses, which requires that they must ‘reflect the fact that religious traditions in Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain’ (UK Parliament, Education Act 1996, Section 375.2). This legislative statement remains a statement of historical and social fact. Of those who identify themselves as having a religion, the majority are Christian, and Christianity has played a particular role in the history of Great Britain. However, the statement in and of itself does not specify how much time should be spent on any worldview. It also does not include non-religious worldviews. We seek views on whether the entitlement should specify a number and range of worldviews, or a minimum time to be spent on one worldview.
 4. We have also discussed whether the name of the subject should be changed, to signify the renewed vision for the subject. It is difficult to find an alternative name that appropriately captures the breadth and depth of the subject as outlined in the entitlement statement. We have discussed a number of options. A small majority of the Commission preferred to call the subject Religion and Ethics (or Religions and Ethics) while others wished either to preserve the current name, or to change its name to Religions and Worldviews or Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (or Philosophy, Religion and Ethics). We seek views on which of these options best captures the nature of the subject outlined in the entitlement. We

also seek suggestions on alternative names which fit the entitlement and the renewed vision for the subject.

HOLDING SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE PROVISION AND QUALITY OF RE

1. We seek views on the most appropriate mechanisms for holding schools to account for the provision and quality of RE at both primary and secondary level.
2. We are considering recommending that a revised qualification at Key Stage 4, for those not taking Full Course GCSE RS, be developed. This would need to meet the requirements of the national entitlement for RE and have currency in school performance measures. This qualification would not be compulsory but would count in school performance measures and in individuals' applications for work or further study. We seek views on how effective this would be and what demand there would be for such a qualification.

A RENEWED AND EXPANDED ROLE FOR SACRES

1. We seek views on the following recommendations on the role of SACREs:
 - a. The Government should publicly highlight and reaffirm the important role of SACREs in supporting and resourcing RE.
 - b. The Government should consider whether the role of SACREs should be expanded to include a duty to advise on all matters relating to religion and belief in schools.
 - c. The Government should consider ways of securing funding to resource SACREs adequately. Options for this may include:
 - i. Ring-fenced funding for SACREs.
 - ii. Funding for SACREs from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport or the Department of Communities and Local Government.
 - iii. Specifying a minimum amount of funding (perhaps per school or per pupil) to which local authorities must adhere.
 - d. The Government should consider the composition of SACREs and the law should be changed to include representatives of non-religious worldviews as full members.
 - e. The Government should publish all SACRE annual reports publicly on a dedicated website.
2. We seek views on what the duties of SACREs should be in relation to promoting good community relations, beyond matters relating to religion

and belief in schools.

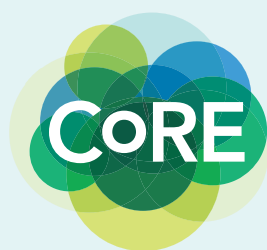
3. We are still considering how the composition of SACREs should be adapted to be fit for purpose in a changed social and educational landscape. In particular, we are considering whether the committee structure should be changed or abolished. We seek views and evidence on this.
4. We seek views on which groups and organisations should be represented on SACREs.

THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL

1. We seek further evidence on the number of pupils being withdrawn from RE, and the reasons given, where these are given, as well as whether the number of cases and reasons given have been changing over time.
2. We seek views on the most effective ways to manage the right of withdrawal in practice.
3. We seek views on whether it is desirable to look to adopt an overall approach to the design of the RE curriculum in every school so that it is sufficiently 'objective, critical and pluralistic' as to render it capable of being compulsory without the right of withdrawal.

A NATIONAL PLAN FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RE

1. We seek views on what should be included in the National Plan for RE, beyond the recommendations set out above.
2. We seek views on how the National Plan might best be implemented.
3. There are increasing expectations of teachers to be engaged with research, by keeping up to date with published research at minimum, and where possible by engaging in action research, lesson study and other forms of practitioner research. We seek views on the kinds of research which would be most helpful for RE teachers to engage with, and what mechanisms would support this.



Commission on Religious Education

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Report produced for the Commission on Religious Education
by NCVO-CES

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Swindon SACRE

Commission on Religious Education Interim report

Discussion Groups

Outcome: To write response to CORE to represent Swindon SACRE's opinions on the key areas contained in the Interim report's suggestions.

Issue 1

The National Entitlement for RE

What do you think about the text of the National Entitlement for Religious Education?

What do you think about the idea of abolishing the Agreed Syllabus Conferences?

How would programmes of study be written? What guidance and support would schools need?

Issue 2

The structure of SACREs

Do you think the current composition of SACREs is fit for 2017 and beyond?

Should the current committee structure be changed or abolished?

What other groups or organisations should be represented on SACRE's?

Issue 3

A renewed and expanded roles for SACREs

How might SACREs be best funded for them to function effectively?

Should SACREs have an expanded role to advise on community relations beyond religion and belief?

How might SACREs be better placed to monitor quality of RE in schools?

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Swindon Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Development Plan 2017 -18

Vision Statement

Swindon SACRE Aims to:

- Enhance the quality of Religious Education and Collective Worship in Swindon Schools / Academies through supporting teachers.
- Ensure the effective management of the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other key stakeholders.
- Monitor schools' provision for RE and Collective Worship as well as the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Encourage Schools, Academies and Colleges to celebrate the religious and cultural diversity found in Swindon.

Improvement Plan 17 - 18

Goals

1. To improve standards of pupil engagement and attainment in Religious Education through high quality CPD.
2. To assess the impact of the new locally agreed syllabus launched November 2016
3. To develop and enhance the possibilities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) offered through Collective Worship (Assemblies).
4. To enhance the vital role that RE must play in contributing to understanding diversity, including through offering direct opportunities for engagement for pupils.

Goal 1 To improve standards of pupil engagement and attainment in Religious Education through offering high quality CPD

Team Leader Emma McCarthy and Katy Staples

What needs changing/ developing/ Sustaining?	What Actions are needed?	Time/ Cost	Persons responsible	KPI Key performance indicators	2017	2018
A More Effective support offered to schools to improve the quality of Religious Education	3 Hub meetings a year supporting RE planned and organised by Emma McCarthy and Emma Ainslie-King All schools and Academies signposted to the Regional and National Conferences (Bristol and LTLRE)	Covered this Academic year by LTLRE charitable giving + time and energy given by Emmas Cost covered by schools paying to attend conferences	EM and EAK KS	Attendance levels at Hub meetings - feedback from teachers and improved engagement by pupils and quality of RE in schools	One Hub meeting	Two Hub meetings Two Conferences - one in January (Bristol) the other in June (LTLRE)

5. Goal 2

To evaluate the effectiveness of SACRE's partnership with the Local Authority and to assess the impact of the new locally agreed syllabus launched November 2016

Team Leaders: Jo Garton and Katy Staples

What needs changing/ developing/ Sustaining?	What Actions are needed?	Time/ Cost	Persons responsible	KPI Key performance indicators	2017	2018
A Ensure the effectiveness of the New Agreed Syllabus as it is taught in schools from September 2017	Teachers need to be asked at Hub meetings to evaluate the New Agreed Syllabus An electronic survey sent to schools Jo Garton to evaluate effectiveness through qualitative feedback through pupil conferencing (linked to the radio)	EM +EAK to take time to ask teachers in a Hub meeting KS to provide survey for Spring meeting KS time to devise survey monkey Time	EM and EAK (KS) KS JG	Feedback gleaned and actions for further support	Interviews done and feedback offered December meeting	Spring meeting March send survey

Goal 3

To develop and enhance the possibilities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development offered through Collective Worship (Assemblies)

Team Leader: Janet French, Norma Mckemey, Revd. Clive Deverell, David Burbridge

What needs changing/ developing/ Sustaining?	What Actions are needed?	Time/ Cost	Persons responsible	KPI Key performance indicators	2017	2018
A The quality of pupils' access to high quality SMSC through well led Collective Worship/ Assemblies across the Local Authority needs greater consistency.	Review "Time to Breathe" Offer training for Teachers and Clergy to provide more effective Collective Worship	People's commitment and time Meeting room and refreshments Training room and refreshments - cost to schools	JF,NM, KS	A refreshed Guidance Document for Collective Worship A successful Training event with good take up and good reviews		March June

Goal 4 To enhance the vital role that RE must play in contributing to understanding diversity, including through offering direct opportunities for engagement events for pupils

Leader. Steph Mundin and Jo Garton

What needs changing/ developing/ Sustaining?	What Actions are needed?	Time/ Cost	Persons responsible	KPI Key performance indicators	2017	2018
A Pupils need to have greater access to a Religious Education that will help them engage with local and regional, national and global diversity	A new directory of key speakers/ places of worship in Swindon and further afield to ensure schools can offer pupils diverse experiences.	Time and effort of SACRE members	Steph Mundin Jo Garton	A comprehensive directory is available for teachers in Swindon	December - Research underway and plan for completion agreed.	February

Swindon RE Hub Meeting – 04.10.17 (Commonweal School)

- 13 teachers attended
4 secondary teachers
9 primary teachers

Primary Group:

- Philip and Ruth talked about the LTLRE conference in July and Ruth shared a hand out from RE Today Services. (Philip's notes are attached)
- Suggested resources:
Acorns to Great Oaks – Marie Delanote
Feelings – Richard Jones/Libby Walden (The Book People)
Your Faith series – Harriet Brundle (The Book People)
Religions of the World (You Tube)
RE today subscription and NATRE membership
Paddington Bear story book for younger children
- We talked about the New RE Agreed Syllabus and how we are getting on in our schools. It was decided that teachers need support with assessment. This will be followed up at our hub meeting in April
- There were three new RE co coordinators at the meeting. EM has offered to run an after-school session in November.
- Don't forget to join our new Facebook group – Swindon RE Teachers
- Remember to contact Fidelma from the Bahai faith if you would like her to come into your school
fidelma@cchange-empowerment.co.uk
- Following our hub meeting at the Hindu temple and cultural centre earlier this year, two schools attending today's hub meeting have booked a visit
- We are hoping to have our February hub meeting at the Swindon mosque (TBC)
- Next hub dates:
Thurs 1st Feb 2018
Thurs 26th April 2018
- RE Annual Conference – 26.01.18 (see attached flyer)

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Annual RE Conference 2018

“Clearing the Fog” - Demystifying key beliefs of world faiths

26 January 2018 9.30am - 3.30pm

Engineers House, Bristol, BS8 3NB

www.bristol.anglican.org

DETAILS:

Our keynote this year will focus on the main world religions other than Christianity. Helen Matter, Schools Adviser for the Diocese of Edmundsbury and Ipswich, will unpack key ideas and concepts in a way that will open up learning in your classroom. Expect to go away with your own subject knowledge deepened, and some fantastic ideas to try out straight away.

1 place is free for a school within South Glos that is NOT an Academy. It is £105 for any other school or academy (within Bristol, BANES, North Somerset, Wiltshire and Swindon). It is £75 for any subsequent delegate from the same school.

FIND OUT MORE:

To register please visit Eventbrite: [Annual RE Conference 2018](#) or contact Ali.Driver@bristoldiocese.org

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