

## **Report for SACRE Summer 2017**

**Purpose of Paper: To Update Swindon SACRE on National Developments with regard to RE and in particular to feedback from the NASACRE AGM**

**SACRE is being asked to: Consider this report and ask if there are any actions for SACRE as a result of this report**

### **NASACRE AGM and Conference 2017**

**York Hilton**

**Dr Joyce Miller - Keynote Speaker**

retired Head of Diversity and Cohesion at Education Bradford.

**Where RE is today: the work of the REC Commission & considerations for SACREs ?**

### **REC Commission work**

Major reports 2015

- A new Settlement
- Living Difference
- RE for Real

Do we really need another report / commission

The most important and responsible thing she has ever been involved in

Make up of Commission:

Chair Very Rev Dr John Hall, 5 academics ,teachers, headteachers, advisers  
lawyer - 14 in total

The Remit for the commission can be found on the CORE website

<http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/>

### **Key questions ?**

Key issues -no surprises.

Quality of RE ?

Legal settlement ?

The public profile?

The question of entitlement?

Progress So far -

## **Public evidence gathering .**

Online evidence

What is evidence - also opinion. Hard evidence - any data useful?

State of the Nation report - REC and NATRE - to give up to date information as much as possible.

Hard to know the state of RE these days - so the more information they can glean the better.

There are 3 more regional meetings - Manchester, Exeter and North East at which evidence will be garnered.

They are also visiting schools, SACREs and collecting other evidence

There will be an Interim report Sept 2017 with a final report in 2018

*Joyce gave a succinct summary of the history of RE since 1980s and then focussed on where we are in RE today*

## **Life in Britain Today and RE's contribution today**

Easy to see binaries and divisions - clash of civilisations Islam and Western Democracies

How do we find a clear way forward?

The past - to the future ?

David Cannadine talks about a "clash of civilisations"

Is history not a series of clashes - but similarities and co-existences + collaboration

Importance of intellectual collaboration across the religions with shifts and collaborations across centuries

## **How does it impact on RE ?**

- How do we avoid generalisations ie : Religion causes all wars
- Avoid religion and belief as separate silos - just one religion adherents
- Address conflict between and within religions
- Examine perceptions and misperceptions
- Focus on commonalities as well as the differences

## **Some of the key questions for RE?**

How do we live together well?

Civil societies that allows conflicting ideologies ?

Equipping Intercultural navigation

Inclusivity -RE for those who do not belong to any institutional religion and for atheists

Homo Deus - The future ? - death overcome - artificial intelligence - computers and technology

Humans conquer the world because we are capable of social cooperation warm should.

What does it mean to be human in the face of rapid change - how do we make it better?

Does this have anImpact on pedagogy

- Should RE include more collaboration and cooperation and more multi-disciplinary approaches?

### **SACREs -AS/ RE/ CW ?**

The purpose of RE is core - policy and power - people - training , support and resources

Local Agreed Syllabuses - some of best RE is done at local level BUT not all AS syllabuses are as good as each other - quality of agreed syllabus?

Is National better? But where is the power?

People - training , support and resources

Future - Distributed power ?

SACRE - is about Religion and Belief across school life and RE is a sub section of this.

Hopes to contribute to the CORE commission to improve RE for every child in the nation.

### **Questions**

Q. What is the clout of these recommendations from CORE ?

A. John Hall as Dean of Westminster as Chair and that has some clout. Need to have politicians on board to see RE as important . **Through Councillors and writing to MPs** - how we get DFE on board .

If this report just went the way of all reports = dispiriting - **needs to impact on policy.**

Q. What is the independence of the commission ? A strong centralist presence - strongly secularists. Is it open to all possibilities?

A. Commission is very far from any decisions. There is a wide range of opinions within the commission. Independent - no funding - secretariat supplied by REC. Dividing line between secularity and religiosity. What areas will be commented on is yet to be decided (ie Faith Schools)

Q. Why is anti-semitism so prevalent in 21st century ?

A. Could also ask why is there so much Islamophobia - has there been any decline in religious hatred since world religions being taught. No decline - does teaching other faiths actually impact towards people of difference. No evidence. We have to teach more than just religion - people are more than religion - people as humans with multi-dimensions. Teaching children about Islam does not help Community Cohesion - Why ? **How do we teach anti racism and anti- religious hatred too.**

Q. Will the commission speak to the local landscape where Academies and Free Schools sit outside the remit of SACREs - can do any syllabus.

A. All is a mess. All chaotic. Who should be on a SACRE ? Over Anglican representations . Committee structures ? No one on CORE is representative of anything - based on skills and expertise. Problem for National representation of religions on any board - can't be done

Q. Gaps that need addressing in RE?

A. Cant add to that - but there are needs in RE - bringing researchers and RE teachers together. Deeper questions of philosophy and pedagogy needed

Q. Who owns RE ? Teachers not valued in the same way as when Working paper 36 was written. **Who owns education now - and RE is within that? SACREs at least hold some accountability for RE.**

Teachers want RE to be the same as other subjects - but which subjects - Music and art - parity with which subjects. Basic curriculum? Not National Conference. Is local energy important ? Who should own it? NO unanimity in RE world - and that is not possible - we have a variety of aims and objectives - we will not all teach it in the same way.

Q. John Hull felt that RE should not be owned by anyone - instead a diversification of power.

**Is SACRE system broken? Is this actually true?**

A. We need evidence as to the effectiveness of SACREs and invite commissioners to SACRE meetings?

## **Key Note Speaker 2**

**Prof Aaqil Ahmed (Prof of School of Media and Performing Arts at Bolton University)**

### **Why religious Literacy is important for community cohesion?**

Professor Ahmed was Head of Religion and Ethics for BBC before that at Channel 4 - before that editor of Everyman.

What is the Media - very complex "Media" is a lazy label?

Papers etc regulate themselves Radio + TV regulated by Ofcom

If you want to see excessive bias go to Fox (USA) etc

### **Post Christian Europe?**

Our world is all media connected

5% population is Muslim

Decline in Christianity but Cathedrals , Pentecostals and RC growing (migration is a factor)

Demographic change - Europe is changing

By 2050 40% will be of a migrant background - several generations ?

Rise of intolerance rise in extremism and rise of far right.

What is it adding up to?

Societies not at ease with themselves - what do we believe in - and how do we navigate that - how do we struggle with more polarised communities. Traditional views distort.

So we have poor religious literacy - in the past it did not matter - people say "I know nothing about religion" as a badge of honour - not acceptable in other fields.

Example at Ch4 Don't do any religion - its easier.

Not to do with fairness - where there is a vacuum prejudice can kick in.

Example : Tommy Robinson (lead of EDL) film introduced to Quilliam - gets on with them - he leaves EDL by Monday press conference .

Scene in the film where he is going the worship, stands outside a Mosque and says:

"These are not places of worship but a command and control centre for terrorism".

Through real encounter he changes his mind and leaves the EDL

We have to plan for poor religious literacy. Religiosity of Young Muslims - more religious than their parents (Cardiff Uni)

Festivals/ Events, Issues and Religious Literacy

Songs of Praise - dying population -changed it to be multi-denominational - see a greater diversity.

Church in the Jungle in Calais - showing faith in crisis . Who-Ha Express said should not be done - did not think we should be doing it . Audience know this is an important support to give refugees. Some newspapers thinking because they had headscarves not Christians but Muslims. Christians support to due to refugees in Biblical narrative - ignorance .

Need to be able to take people on a learning journey - important - and a great shelf life.

Religion is important to broadcasting - not possible to keep the status quo - should have religious literacy strategy which should be regulated.

Spent 10 years on committees trying to deliver diversity - include religion - not heard - institutions can can monitor race but not religion.

Teaching about belief has no impact without understanding communities - safe places to study - are required in a hyper- diverse society some basic knowledge is essential.

There are too many opportunities to make too many mistakes.

Narrative around religion is very negative - changing that can can make a huge difference

Made a film called "The Muslim Premier league"

Club doctor of Liverpool was a Muslim - people were constantly asking questions about his faith. Liverpool wins league club - we will spray Champagne in changing room

Dr. Zafar -player arranged to place the doctors bag outside the changing room so it wouldn't get splashed.

Steven Gerrard arranged to take the bag outside. He knew enough to show care and respect. He was sufficiently religiously literate to care.

Footballers are now surrounded by Muslims - good players in a squad as they bring discipline and self care.

World Post 9/11 - religion means much more - offering comfort and confidence to be who they want to be - a huge comfort.

Religion is not irrelevant - in public spaces - how do we deliver it by authentic means

Inspirational teachings - protected and invested - a structure that says this is a must have Religion and Belief in a context of modernity - conversations in the UK and part of other subjects - politics, arts , English etc.

We need to explore the intersection where “Religion is and how it impacts on the world today”. It doesn’t have to be difficult it just to be interesting - engaging.

**As there any other subject as important as Religion today?**

No more important subject than that.

**Future of Religious Broadcasting?**

He was based in Salford - Dept of Religion and Ethics at BBC - over the last few years Independent production Companies - and gone over to a commissioning model was 50% commissioned - the system is now broken - Now a system of no commissioning a free for all - but can pitch for foreign broadcasting - have to put programmes out to tender - goes to outside production companies. Songs of Praise now gone out to a Production Company - so now gone out to lots of different companies. To be able to offer balanced offer for religious literacy whereas there is a super-serving for certain groups - all overlapping and repetitious across networks.

**Muslim concentrations in HE**

Higher % of young Muslims stay at home to go to University than before which has an impact and Universities becoming segregated in areas where there are larger numbers of Muslims.

**Question Time Panel : Joyce Miller, Aaqil Ahmed and Charles Clarke**

**Where are the boundaries for fudgy edges for RE?**

Overall range of areas of learning philosophy etc and religions , content and knowledge verses personal development and a searching for meaning.

What takes place in RE and the conduct of the school and the way it operates .

The role of HT and Govs - ensuring the place of RE - and how RE effects the rest of the curriculum.

Why do we want RE - Community Cohesion and Understanding Culture?

RE does not hold responsibility for these but contributes to them . Exploring belief, culture and controversy

**What are the most important steps that we can take right now to improve the quality of RE right now.**

Use the networks you have between schools and faith communities where you are.

Trying to develop religious literacy for all teachers not just teachers of RE.

Celebrating Good RE - and congratulating it and sharing good practice - press releases and getting PR right - using success and sharing good practice.

Enabling use of religious buildings.

Help develop a strategy for Religious Literacy - people want to do things but they don't know how.

### **How do we persuade those who control education to value RE? (Charles Clarke)**

Who do we think controls education - key issue is to raise the standards and interest in RE - it is a critical area - but that is not how the National Curriculum works. The status of RE is not high enough - leads to a patchy state of affairs . The subject does not have enough status - need to push forward .

Politicians see it is a risky topic for electability. Needs to be a collective endeavour.

### **If you had a million pounds to spend on religious literacy how would you spend it.**

Make it integral in education - important to get it right. Invest heavily religion embedded - make it interesting - less about visits less about dogma - learning about the impact on lives so you respect them - all money spent on kids.

ITT and CPD vital - something deeper - how pupils are viewed - we are not pupil centred but curriculum focused - need to open our eyes and be religion aware - equalities means treating people differently and serving them.

### **Student teachers not receiving RE and then teachers not seeing it as a priority**

Universities only meet the regulated market - need to change the market and the regulation.

Would make a difference if Part 2 of the teachers expectations included "developing religious literacy"

But we don't have a common understanding of religious literacy - we don't all agree.

Religious Literacy needs to be entertaining to be effective.

### **Business Meeting**

**Payment from SACREs** - when payment is made - notification needs to be made as well as payment **Westhill Awards** the successful SACRE bids were announced