

Swindon Borough Council

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday, 8 December 2008

Committee Room 6, Civic Offices, Swindon
(Anticipated meeting room)

At 6.00 p.m.

**Councillors
(Group A)**

Councillor Doreen Dart
Councillor Raymond Fisher
Councillor Michael Bray
Councillor Fay Howard
Councillor David Sammels

**Church of England
(Group B)**

The Venerable Alan Hawker
Ms Norma McKemey
Ms Steph Mundin
Mr. Paul Noble
Mrs Penny Summers

**Teacher Organisations
(Group C)**

Mr David Easter
Ms Jo Garton
Mrs Tracy Mason
Mrs Emma McCarthy
Miss Anne Wang
Mrs Mandy Sandleton
Mrs Helen Miller
1 Vacancy

**Other Faiths
(Group D)**

Mrs Helen Hancox, United Reformed Church
Reverend David Howell, Swindon Evangelical Alliance
Mr M S Khan, Muslim Community
Reverend Paul Knight, Baptist
Mr Dinesh Patel, Hindu Community
Mrs Wendy Tucker, Methodist Church
1 Vacancy (Catholic)
1 Vacancy (Sikh Community)

SACRE Advisor:

Ms Katy Staples, Bristol Diocese - Schools Advisor

Committee Officer: Sarah Lawrence (Telephone 01793 463603)

email: slawrence@swindon.gov.uk

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

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Membership Update (DLDS-B) (Pages 1 - 2)

To recommend the SACRE confirms the appointment of Mr Malkit Singh Virk as the representative of the Sikh Community on Group D.

5. Minutes (Pages 3 - 6)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2008.

6. SACRE Member Presentation

To receive a short presentation from a member of the SACRE on their beliefs.

At the request of the Chair, Ms Jo Garton will provide a short presentation at the meeting on humanism, and will answer questions from SACRE members.

7. Update on 'Face to Faith' Project (DCY-H) (Pages 7 - 10)

8. Feedback on use of the AERIAC Toolkit in a local school (Ms Jo Garton / Mrs Penny Summers) (Pages 11 - 12)

9. SACRE Annual Report (SACRE Adviser – Ms Katy Staples) (Pages 13 - 14)
The Annual Report covering report is attached. Appendix 1 is to follow.

10. Correspondence / Newsletter (DLDS-B) (Pages 15 - 36)

- A copy of a letter from the QCA is attached providing the Autumn RE Update. This highlights their view on the key issues for SACREs at this time, and can be used to shape future agendas.
- A copy of the Autumn 2008 NASACRE Newsletter is attached for information. SACRE Members are invited to notify the clerk if there are any issues they wish to explore in detail at a future meeting.

11. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SACRE is on 9th March 2009. At a previous meeting Members asked that this meeting be arranged at an alternative venue.

Members of the SACRE are asked to contact the clerk if they wish to offer to host the next SACRE meeting at their school or place of worship.

Date of Despatch: 28 November 2008

Key: Officers:

DLDS-B - Director of Law and Democratic Services

DCY-H – Director of Community

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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Membership Update

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

Author: Director of Law and Democratic Services

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To ask the SACRE to confirm the appointment of a new member to a vacancy in the Other Faiths Group on the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Recommendation

- That Mr Malkit Singh Virk be appointed to the SACRE as a member of Group D (Other Faiths) to serve for the remainder of the term of office of the Sikh Community representative replaced, up until September 2011, unless re-appointed at that point for a four year term by Full Council.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 The Council appoints the membership of SACRE every four years, but the SACRE approves changes to membership mid-term. The membership of the SACRE was last reviewed by Full Council in September 2007.

2. Detail

- 2.1 Group D (Other Faiths) group has carried a vacancy for a Sikh Community representative since November 2007, when Mr Grewal stepped down.
- 2.2 Mr Malkit Singh Virk has now been nominated by the Sikh Community to serve on the SACRE. It is asked that the SACRE approve this appointment for a term of office up to September 2011.

Alternative Options

- None.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- This report has no specific legal or human rights implications.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- The work of the SACRE contributes to the Corporate Plan aims to improve the

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sarah Lawrence on 01793 463603, Email slawrence@swindon.gov.uk.

Membership Update

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

opportunities for children and young people.
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Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted on all reports.
- Director of Schools and Learning

Background Papers and Appendices

- None

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sarah Lawrence on 01793 463603, Email slawrence@swindon.gov.uk.

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MONDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2008

PRESENT:-

Group A: Councillors	Councillors Doreen Dart (Chair), Michael Bray, David Sammels, Raymond Fisher and Fay Howard
Group B: Church of England	Mr. Paul Noble, Ms Steph Mundin and Ms Norma McKemey
Group C: Teacher Organisations	Mrs Helen Miller and Mrs Tracy Mason
Group D: Other Faiths	Mrs Helen Hancox (United Reformed Church), Mr Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community) and Mrs Wendy Tucker (Methodist Church)
Co-opted Members:	Ms Katy Staples (SACRE Advisor)

Apologies for absence were received from The Venerable Alan Hawker, Mrs Penny Summers, Mr David Easter, Ms Jo Garton, Mrs Emma McCarthy, Miss Anne Wang, Mrs Mandy Sandleton, Reverend David Howell, Mr M S Khan and Reverend Paul Knight

13. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Nominations were invited for the role of Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2008/09. No nominations were received.

Resolved – That no appointment to Vice-Chair be made at this time, and that a Meeting Chair be appointed as required in the event that the Chair is unable to attend any future meeting.

14. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations of interest were made.

15. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

16. Minutes

Resolved – (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st July 2008 be approved.

17. Chair's Announcements

The Chair of SACRE, Councillor Doreen Dart, made the following announcements:

- ◆ A copy of the "Guidance for Primary Schools in Wiltshire and Swindon on the New Creative Curriculum", developed by Katy Staples (Swindon SACRE) and Verity Holloway (Wiltshire SACRE) would be sent out to Primary Schools. The Committee were invited to provide comments on the document of Katy Staples. It was noted that a fuller discussion would take place at the next SACRE on the implications of the new primary curriculum and approach. The SACRE discussed the opportunities presented by the new curriculum for using other topics to cover Religious Education teaching but also the pitfalls of relying too heavily on the use of other subjects to teach R.E. which could detract from the full curriculum being taught.
- ◆ The SACRE noted the training sessions on the teaching of R.E. that Katy Staples was planning to make available to schools during the next two terms. This had been updated since the circulation of the Agenda.
- ◆ The SACRE noted that the Sikh community had nominated a representative to sit on the other Faith's Group of the SACRE and this nomination would be brought to the next SACRE meeting for formal approval.

18. Understanding Faith

The Clerk to the SACRE advised that no member of the SACRE was available to provide an understanding Faith Presentation at this meeting. The Clerk invited members of the SACRE to volunteer for a future meeting if they wished to give a presentation on their faith or beliefs.

19. Update on Community Cohesion in Schools

The SACRE received a presentation and report from the SACRE Advisor setting out the new inspection regime on the promotion of community cohesion in schools introduced by OFSTED from September 2008. The SACRE discussed the interrelation between the teaching of Religious Education and the duty to promote community cohesion. It was agreed that RE provides a reason, and way in which children can understand similarities and differences in beliefs, which contribute to community cohesion, and the promotion of community cohesion can raise the profile of RE. However, RE would not cover all the elements of social, economic, race, faith and non-religious views required to be covered, nor would it necessarily be able to express all the geographical dimensions of community including the school, local, UK and global. The SACRE hoped that schools would use the new inspection regime to highlight the good strategies and practice already in place.

Resolved – That the SACRE notes the new the inspection regime for schools in relation to their duty to promote community cohesion.

20. Changes to Circular 1/94 - The Operation of SACREs

The SACRE received a report from the Director of Law and Democratic Services and the SACRE Advisor updating it on the timetable for the review of Circular 1/94. It was noted that the review was likely to change the way in which the SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference was constituted and operates. It was understood that the provisions regarding collective worship would be reviewed at a later date. The SACRE noted the method of review and timescales as set out in the

report including that a full formal constitution would be carried out by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in April or May 2009 with a view to the provisions coming into effect in October 2009.

Resolved – That the SACRE notes the report in relation to the review of Circular 1/94.

21. NASACRE Newsletter

The SACRE received the latest edition of the SACRE News from the National Association of SACREs for information and were invited to highlight any issues of interest for the Clerk to include on the next Agenda.

22. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The SACRE noted that its next meeting would take place on Monday 8th December 2008 at 6.00 pm. The SACRE agreed that this meeting would be held within the Civic Offices but asked that the Clerk seek an alternative venue for the meeting scheduled for 9th March 2009 at 6.00 pm.

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Update on Face to Faith Project

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

Author: Director of Community / Community Support Manager

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To update the SACRE on the progress regarding the implementation of the NASACRE *Face to Faith* project

Recommendation

SACRE is requested -

- To note progress to date
- To note that a short interim report will be required by NASACRE by 31 March 2009

1. Reasons

- 1.1 At the SACRE meeting on 1 July 2008, it was confirmed that the application to NASACRE for the Young Inter-Faith Projects fund had been successful.
- 1.2 The project called Face to Faith proposed to create 'faith clubs' in four secondary schools in Swindon as a trial for one school year - 08/09. The aim of the project is to initiate and support interfaith dialogue between young people from different schools, different neighbourhoods and different faith positions through a school-based club.

2. Detail

The Project

- 2.1 The project originally proposed to run in four secondary schools in Swindon. Progress at November 08 is as follows:
 - Two Groups comprising Years 7-9 meeting for 1 hour after school open to all (Kingsdown School and Greendown School)
 - 1 Group comprising Year 10 meeting for 40 minutes over lunch time with selected pupils (Commonweal School)
 - 1 group still to be confirmed
 - Kingsdown club started on the 19th November with the remaining clubs due to start after Christmas.
- 2.2 A set of sessions have been planned and are being led by two Swindon Borough Council engagement workers (Katalin Wood and Nan Bains).

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Paula Harrison on 01793 466418, Email pharrison@swindon.gov.uk.

Update on Face to Faith Project

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

Each club will have also gain access to a range of expertise and support through Mobile Media to develop their project independently and creatively.

2.3 A summary of the session content is as follows:

- Introductions, Identity (defining personal beliefs)
- Where do our beliefs come from?
- How does Religion/Faith shape behaviour at school and at home?
- Language (impact of bullying and assumptions around Faith)?
- Myth-busting
- Experiences of religious education and other learning
- Local Research/Mapping
- Finding common ground

Data around each theme will be used to inform each creative project.

Challenges:

- 2.4 Early challenges are to get the fourth school engaged quickly to enable a start date in January 2009.
- 2.5 Early feedback indicates that the clubs may only attract small numbers of pupils, however it is still very early stages. As a pilot, every effort will be made to encourage wider participation and engage with the wider school community. Achieving a diverse group of pupils may also be a challenge without adopting a 'selection' method of recruitment.
- 2.6 The work at Kingsdown School has highlighted that it can be challenging to retain a focus on religion/beliefs rather than wider discussion on identity, difference and bullying. This may be indicative of real-life challenges for pupils.
- 2.7 The original intention of this project was to showcase the projects in a single event in June/July 2009. This timescale is now very challenging but still hoped to be feasible.
- 2.8 A more detailed update will be reported to SACRE once the other school clubs have progressed. However, it should be noted that a short interim report from this SACRE will be required to NASACRE by 31st March 2009 and any resources resulting from the project are requested to be submitted for wider circulation across other SACREs.

Alternative Options

- None

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Paula Harrison on 01793 466418, Email pharrison@swindon.gov.uk.

Update on Face to Faith Project

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- The costs of this project are part funded by the application to NASACRE and part funded by project funding made available for community cohesion from Government Office South West.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- This report has no specific legal or human rights implications.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- The work of the SACRE contributes to the Corporate Plan aims to improve the opportunities for children and young people, it also contributes to Local Area Agreement (LAA2), National Indicator 2 – promoting a sense of belonging.

Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted on all reports.
- Director of Schools and Learning.

Background Papers and Appendices

- None

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Feedback on the use of the AERIAC Toolkit in a local school

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

Author: Director of Law and Democratic Services

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- That two members of the SACRE give a presentation on an example of the successful use of the AERIAC toolkit in a local school.

Recommendation

SACRE is requested -

- To note the presentation.
- To consider how other schools might be encouraged to use the AERIAC toolkit.
- To consider how the SACRE might collect data arising from use of the toolkit in schools to be able to provide better support to schools and assess where initiatives are being successful.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 The SACRE has a duty to help schools fulfil their statutory obligations with regard to religious education.
- 1.2 It is important that the SACRE be kept informed about the provision for religious education and collective worship in schools in the Borough and the tools being provided to support schools.

2. Detail

Background Information -

- 2.1 The SACRE set up a pilot project for monitoring RE in schools. As reported to the July 2008 meeting, Members of the SACRE (currently Penny Summers, Paul Noble and Anne Wang) have been trained to support teachers to use the AERIAC (Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants) toolkit to evaluate their RE. At that point, two secondary schools and four primary schools had volunteered to take part. A copy of the full toolkit will be available at the meeting for the SACRE to view, for information.
- 2.2 Key outcomes of those who have taken part have been to -
 - Celebrate success in their school,

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sarah Lawrence on 01793 463603, Email slawrence@swindon.gov.uk.

Feedback on the use of the AERIAC Toolkit in a local school

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

- Clarify of the aims for RE in the school,
- Identify areas for development,
- Highlight areas of concern,
- Develop awareness of how to gather evidence on the delivery of the subject in the classroom.
- In the process of self-evaluation.

Presentation

- 2.3 Ms Jo Garton and Mrs Penny Summers will present to the SACRE on their experience of using the toolkit in a local school.
- 2.4 It is suggested that as a result of the presentation, the SACRE might wish to consider how to encourage other schools to utilise the toolkit. In addition, how SACRE might glean information about the performance of RE in the Borough as a result in order to provide additional support where required and recognise best practice to be shared with others.

Alternative Options

- None

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- The costs of these support activities are currently met from within the SACRE budget, which is £5000k a year, and this will be a limiting factor on how many support visits can be available to assist schools to complete the AERIAC toolkit in a year.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- This report has no specific legal or human rights implications.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- The work of the SACRE contributes to the Corporate Plan aims to improve the opportunities for children and young people, and to support local communities by empowering people to participate in local decision-making and overcoming social exclusion.

Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted on all reports.
- Director of Schools and Learning and Sarah Foulkes, Primary Link Adviser

Background Papers and Appendices

- None
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Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sarah Lawrence on 01793 463603, Email slawrence@swindon.gov.uk.

Annual Report

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

Author: Director of Law and Democratic Services / SACRE Advisor

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To receive the draft Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report to be submitted to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), covering the period September 2007 to September 2008, and authorise the SACRE Advisor to amend and submit the final version to the QCA.

Recommendation

- That the draft SACRE's Annual Report attached at Appendix '1' be considered and the SACRE Advisor be authorised to finalise the report, taking into account any comments provided by SACRE Members, and submit it to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).
- That the SACRE give consideration at its next meeting to its development plan, and how its work in the coming year should be shaped by any gaps identified through the 2007/2008 Annual Report.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education is required by Section 391 of the Education Act 1996 to produce an Annual Report of the exercise of its functions during the preceding year.

2. Detail

- 2.1 The draft Annual Report of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education is attached at Appendix '1' for the SACRE's consideration.
- 2.2 This is in new format, which has been set by the QCA. It is suggested that the SACRE gives detailed consideration at its next meeting of implications of the Annual Report for its development plan and future work priorities.
- 2.3 The SACRE is asked to consider the draft report and SACRE Members asked to provide any comments to the SACRE Advisor by 15th December, and authorise the SACRE Advisor to finalise the Report and submit it to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The deadline for submission is 31 December 2008.

Alternative Options

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Katy Staples on 0117 927 7454 or katy.staples@bristoldiocese.org or from Sarah Lawrence on 01793 463603, Email slawrence@swindon.gov.uk.

Annual Report

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Date: 8 December 2008

- None.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- None associated with this report.

Legal / Human Rights Implications

- This report has no specific legal or human rights implications.

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)

- The work of the SACRE contributes to the Corporate Plan aims to improve the opportunities for children and young people.

Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted on all reports.
- Director of Schools and Learning
- Sarah Foulkes, Primary Link Advisor

Background Papers and Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Annual Report (To Follow)

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Katy Staples on 0117 927 7454 or katy.staples@bristoldiocese.org or from Sarah Lawrence on 01793 463603, Email slawrence@swindon.gov.uk.



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

**RE Update
Autumn 2008**

Introduction

Welcome to the RE update from the QCA for Autumn 2008. The purpose of this update is to keep in touch with RE partner organisations. It lets organisations and individuals in the RE community know about the ways in which the QCA is supporting RE as part of the whole curriculum. The update has links to several web pages, so it can be used electronically and hosted on the websites of RE organisations, as appropriate.

After the news items, two questions appear, designed to prompt discussion. Please feel free to use these, as appropriate.

1. Independent review of the primary curriculum

Since the publication of the Children's Plan in December 2007 (see link below), QCA has been working with Sir Jim Rose on a review of the primary curriculum. The intention is to take the national framework for RE into the new primary curriculum on a non-statutory basis, as happened in the secondary curriculum review. The QCA's group of RE consultants has supported this process and begun work on it, while a set of smaller development groups have begun work on programmes of learning. The work is based on the three aims (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens), and will be organised around key concepts and key processes.

Sir Jim Rose's interim report is expected in November 2008, and his final report will be in April 2009. First teaching of the new curriculum will be in September 2011.

The key relevant documents are:

Executive Summary of the Children's Plan:
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/>

The description of Sir Jim Rose's remit to work with the QCA on the primary review:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/index.shtml>

Thinking Primary: QCA's web pages reporting on our conversations with Heads and teachers, and our evidence reports:

http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_15561.aspx

QCA's slides on the emerging curriculum design model:

[http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/Independent_Review_of_the_Primary_Curriculum_slide_set_July_08\(1\).pdf](http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/Independent_Review_of_the_Primary_Curriculum_slide_set_July_08(1).pdf)

2. New QCA documents

The latest QCA documents that will very soon be uploaded include:

- *SACREs and Community Cohesion*: the 2008 annual analysis of SACRE annual reports, focusing on community cohesion
- *'I didn't know they could do that!'*: a report on the cultural understandings of science project, exploring Muslim contributions to scientific thinking and discovery and its impact on current scientific understanding.

3. Work with SACREs

QCA is in discussion with the professional associations for RE (including NATRE, AREIAC, NASACRE, SHAP and the RE Council) to explore and hopefully agree further strategic advice for SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences during a time of rapid curriculum change.

4. Pedagogy in RE

This year and next, QCA will work with Ofsted and other bodies to focus on pedagogical issues in RE. There now exists an opportunity to explore issues in planning and teaching, and to engage in national debate about the nature of good pedagogy in RE. In addition to academic work by leading RE thinkers, the raw material for this debate comes from several sources: the Ofsted long report (*Making Sense of Religion*, 2007); Mary Hayward's report for Warwick University (*The Teaching of Christianity at KS3*, 2007); the Religious Education Council's commission report (2007); and the work of more than 30 regional support advisers to give training on RE in the new secondary curriculum.

The intention is to engage in developmental debate. This is not designed to promote any particular pedagogical model(s) but to promote teachers'

own awareness of their pedagogy, and their versatility is using different models appropriately.

5. Assessment in RE

QCA has developed, and is presently trialling, a new model of assessment for the KS3 curriculum. The model reflects AfL approaches, embeds assessment in teaching, and underpins personalised learning. Assessing pupils' progress (APP) is designed to improve learning outcomes by providing teachers with more effective assessment approaches. RE is taking part in this trial, using concepts from the key stage 3 programme of study (evolved framework).

The project is working with pilot schools to generate exemplars and to develop assessment focuses.

The outcomes of this will shine a very useful light on effective assessment in RE. In particular, it will help us all to explore how concepts can be taught and assessed.

Information on the assessment project can be found at http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13581.aspx

6. Implementation and development of the secondary curriculum

The new secondary curriculum started life in schools in September 2008. QCA is still looking for case studies in all subjects, including RE, related to one or more of the key concepts. Case studies can also address the relationship between RE and the ECM outcomes, RE and personal, learning and thinking skills, and RE and concepts in other subjects. We need further national debate and exemplification on good examples of cross-curricular collaboration.

7. Future of QCA

In 2009, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority will move its office to Coventry and will become the QCDA – Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency. We will have a continuing and expanding role in reviewing the curriculum as a whole, partnering subject communities and other organisations, to develop a modern, world-class curriculum. We will be developing our work in strategic engagement with all professionals in the children's workforce, as well as parents, faith/belief communities, governors, employers, and children themselves.

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SACRE NEWS



Issue 23

EDITORIAL



"We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."

Martin Luther King, Jr

The Government is concerned that everyone should work together to build a community that is cohesive as an investment in a shared future for all people who live and / or work in the United Kingdom. Amongst other actions that have been introduced in the wider society, since September 2007, all maintained schools in England have a duty to promote community cohesion and, from this September, Ofsted has a duty to inspect and report on the contribution made by schools to community cohesion.

One of the ways that schools contribute to this is by providing a curriculum planned to play a key part in promoting community cohesion; this should support children and young people in learning to understand others, to value diversity, to be aware of human rights and understand the importance of applying and defending them.

Religious Education clearly plays a large part in this offer as it enables young people to learn about and encounter the many



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religious communities in their neighbourhoods. It enhances pupils' awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religion on individuals, families, communities and cultures. Religious education in the curriculum affirms the place of faith in individual lives and contributes to the well-being of a community by promoting the development of an attitude of respect towards each other.

At the NASACRE Seminar for Muslim SACRE members at Islam Expo in the summer, Alveena Malik from the Institute for Community cohesion explored the link between SACRES



and Community cohesion. Her power – point presentation for that day is on the NASACRE website and can be used with your SACRE. Some extended notes on community cohesion that I have prepared are also on the site and may be adapted for your SACRE.



Over the past term members of the NASACRE Executive have been engaged in a number of activities to support SACREs and their work. Alongside other NASACRE Executive members who represent other interests on these bodies, Bill Moore and I have represented NASACRE on the steering group of the review of Circular 1/94 and on the QCA review group for the Primary Curriculum. At the summer meeting of London SACREs, in the absence of John Keast who was ill, I explained how the Circular review process is taking place and the power point presentation I gave to them on that day is on the NASACRE website for SACREs to use. At all stages we keep in mind the impact of this work on SACREs and on the development, implementation and monitoring of Agreed Syllabuses.

The extension of the SACRE Recruitment & Training programme is underway in the Midlands, the North East and Yorkshire & Humberside. Many of you have been invited to meetings to explore the way that SACREs can support and prepare for the introduction of new members for committee A. Further unexpected funding from the DCSF has enabled us to extend this to London and part of the South-East this year. All of this work will be completed by the end of the financial year and we look forward to working with SACREs in other parts of the

country next year. As a by-product of this we are reviewing the booklet 'So you are joining your local SACRE' in collaboration with the Free Churches' Education Committee, a co-ordinating group of Churches Together in England. Copies of that should be available for all SACREs before the end of term.

The invitations to SACREs to engage with the Recruitment & Training initiative has sadly again reinforced the need for SACREs to be proactive in informing us of changes of personnel, particularly clerks and administrators. Please can all SACREs check that we have accurate details about your SACRE on the members section of our website and let us know if these need to be updated? I will soon be writing to all SACREs inviting applications for a new round of |Young



People Faith Forum projects –it would be sad if that email became lost in the mysteries of your council simply because we have not realised a clerk had moved on. We heard from some of these exciting projects at the AGM and many SACREs who have received awards have submitted reports of their work which are posted on the Projects section of the NASACRE website. This edition includes a report from Lewisham SACRE of their event last summer.

Have a good term and enjoy all and every celebration that your faith / belief marks now and for the new year.

Denise Chaplin

Community Cohesion in schools

September 2008

Here we present just a small section of Denise Chaplin's excellent 'Notes on Community Cohesion' the full version of which you can download from the 'Your next SACRE agenda' section of the NASACRE website. Please take the chance to look at the full version.

'When you understand someone else's culture, you're more likely to respect them'
(Year 12 pupil quoted in the Ajegbo Report)

The Government is concerned to build a community that is cohesive as an investment in a shared future for all people who live or work in the UK.

Amongst other actions that have been introduced in the wider society, since September 2007, all maintained schools in England have a duty to promote community cohesion.

Section 21(4) of the Education Act 2002 (as inserted by section 38 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) states that:

'The governing body of a maintained school shall, in discharging their functions relating to the conduct of the school

- (a) promote the well-being of pupils at the school, and*
- (b) in the case of a school in England, promote community cohesion.'*

From 1 September 2008, HMCI has a duty under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as inserted by section 154 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) to inspect and report on the contribution made by schools to community cohesion.

So what is community cohesion?

In a cohesive community / society:

- there is a shared vision and people believe they can invest in a shared future;
- all individuals/ communities / groups feel they belong;
- the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued;
- equal / similar life opportunities are available to all;
- strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed;
- people know their rights and responsibilities;
- individuals trust each other and local / national institutions;

The National Context

- Increased and growing diversity in the UK – over 300 languages are spoken in London schools;
- Mobility of communities – into and out of the inner cities;
- Segregated communities – living parallel lives;
- Impact on public services, employment; housing, hospitals;
- Ignorance of other communities = fear;
- Racism;
- Rise of extremism.

What is the context for the school's responsibility?

"There are only two lasting bequests we can give our children... one is roots, the other wings."

Stephen Covey

Every school is responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of culture, religions or beliefs, ethnicities and social backgrounds.

The DCSF Cohesion Aim

The Children's Plan aims to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up.

The Children's Plan sets out the aim for all children to:

- understand others, value diversity, apply and defend human rights and are skilled in participation and responsible action;
- fulfil their potential and success at the highest level possible, with no barriers to access and participation in learning and to wider activities and no variation between outcomes for members of different groups;
- Have real and positive relationships with people from different backgrounds and feel part of a community at a local, national and international level.



Community from a school's perspective

(Ofsted guidance)

"For schools, the term 'community' has a number of dimensions including:

- the school community – the children and young people it serves, their parents, carers and families, the school's staff and governing body, and community users of the school's facilities and service
- the community within which the school is located – the school in its geographical community and the people who live or work in that area. This applies not just to the immediate neighbourhood but also to the city or local authority area within which a school is located
- the UK community – all schools are by definition part of this community
- the global community – formed by EU and international links.
- In addition, schools themselves create communities – for example, the networks formed by similar or different types of schools, by schools that are part of the specialist schools network, or by schools that work collaboratively in clusters or in other models of partnership."

How schools can contribute towards a cohesive society

Schools are well placed to become a focal point for the local community and to act as a catalyst to foster better relationships between diverse communities.

For some schools with diverse pupil populations, existing activities and work aimed at supporting pupils from different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds to learn with, from and about each other, contribute well towards community cohesion. The introduction of the duty on schools to promote community cohesion recognises the good work that many schools are already doing to encourage community cohesion.

For schools where the pupil population is less diverse, more will need to be done to provide opportunities for interaction between children and young people from different backgrounds.

School managers and staff need to have a clear view about what community cohesion is, how the school is able to contribute to this and where it is necessary or possible to develop even greater and more consistent contributions. This

Should be clearly communicated to all partners and these partners should understand how they able to contribute and be able to articulate their views and concerns about this are of work.

Just as each school is different, each school will make an important but different contribution to community cohesion. Each will therefore need to develop an approach reflecting:

- the nature of the school's population – does it serve pupils drawn predominantly from one or a small number of religions or beliefs, ethnic or socio-economic groups or from a broader cross-section of the population, or does it selects by ability from across a wider area.
- the location of the school – e.g. the level of ethnic, socio-economic, religious or non-religious diversity in the area.

An effective approach to community cohesion considers these factors alongside the levels of community where action can take place – within the school itself, the geographical community or the wider national and global communities – to determine the school's contribution to community cohesion accordingly.

Schools contribute by:

helping children and young people:

- to learn to understand and value others;
- to value diversity whilst also promoting shared values;
- to develop the skills of participation and responsible action.

Broadly, a school's contribution to community cohesion can be grouped under the three following headings:

Teaching, learning and curriculum

Schools contribute by providing a curriculum planned to be effective in playing a key part in promoting community cohesion. This should help children and young people to learn to understand others, to value diversity whilst also promoting shared values, to be aware of human rights and understand the importance of applying and defending them.

They should also develop the skills of participation and responsible action – for example through the new 'Identity and Diversity: living together in the UK' strand within citizenship education.

What does this look like?

- teaching and curriculum provision that supports high standards of attainment, promotes common values, and builds pupils' understanding of the diversity that surrounds them;
- lessons across the curriculum that promote common values and help pupils to value differences and challenge prejudice and stereotyping;
- a programme of curriculum based activities whereby pupils' understanding of community and diversity is enriched through fieldwork, visits and meetings with members of different communities;
- support for pupils for whom English is an additional language to enable them to achieve at the highest possible level in English.

Citizenship education, history, geography, religious education and personal, social and health education can all help young people develop and reinforce their sense of identity.

The new citizenship programmes of study include a new strand of work examining the key concepts of identity and diversity and encouraging exploration of what it means to be a citizen in the UK today.

This change was supported by the findings of the Review of Citizenship and Diversity in the Curriculum, undertaken by Sir Keith Ajegbo.

Citizenship education addresses issues relating to social justice, human rights, community cohesion and global interdependence. Links between different schools, whether on a local, national or international basis enable sharing of experience – contributing significantly to schools meeting the new duty.

Knowing and understanding the beliefs and values of others helps to remove barriers and enable young people to empathise and engage with each other.

Religious education enables young people to learn about and encounter the many religious communities in their neighbourhoods.

Support Materials

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion ¹ to support schools in implementing the duty on 19 July 2007. This guidance defines what is meant by community cohesion and how schools can contribute towards it through their teaching and learning, their work to raise standards and ethos, engagement with the community and extended services.

Alongside the guidance there is a range of case study examples of work that many schools are doing in this area.

A wide range of materials to support schools is available now on Teachernet.

Useful guidance on building cohesive communities can also be found on:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/>

The following award system has been used in several UK schools as a way of organising a whole schools approach to community cohesion:

http://www.unicef.org.uk/tz/teacher_support/rrs_award.asp

¹<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?>

[PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00598-2007&](http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00598-2007&)

Holocaust Memorial Day 27 January 2009

What are your schools doing about it?

Lots of schools are using Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) to help young people think about the importance of respecting difference. This is a topical whole school issue as well fitting in very well with the Religious Education and Citizenship curriculum.

The aim of HMD is to remember both the Holocaust and more recent genocides, including Cambodia, Rwanda, the ethnic cleansing of Muslim in Bosnia and events in present day Darfur. The focus of the day is on all the victims of the Nazis (Jews, the Gay community, Disabled people, Gypsies, Black people, Jehovah's Witnesses etc) and more recent genocides.

In particular, this year's theme for schools is "Stand up to Hatred" and the aim is to encourage young people to remember the past but also to stand up to hatred in their own communities by challenging modern day prejudice and misconceptions (against asylum seekers and refugees, religious groups, people of a different race) This years HMD education pack (WHICH IS FREE and can be ordered by emailing enquiries@hmd.org.uk) contains an activity board, case studies, lesson plans and scripts for collective worship which can be used on or around January 27th. Many students enjoy working towards an HMD event, especially if RE teachers work with other colleagues and use the creative arts to help pupils express their ideas.



Holocaust Memorial Day provides a good opportunity to work across the whole community, not just the school. Can you create a chance for your pupils to really take part in community activities where they can work together and see that their actions are important? You might choose to explore, for example, inequalities within communities and how communities can protect against exclusion.

Can you encourage your schools and communities to be involved and not just be 'bystanders'?



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

Tricia Martin

MONITORING and TRAINING - *Enriching the role of your SACRE*



By **Graham Langtree: Devon RE Adviser**

A question I continually ask about the SACREs I am involved in is when we have finished the meeting, what impact will our meeting have had on children and young peoples' learning in RE and quality of experience in collective worship? Does our work really have a beneficial impact in improving RE? Or put another way, if SACREs were abolished would we really be missed? And by whom? (NB I am not suggesting SACREs should be abolished ! I think they need strengthening!)

When I had the privilege of being RE Adviser at QCA, along with colleagues at OFSTED, we developed the self-evaluation for SACREs which highlighted five central dimensions of a SACRE's work namely:-

- Standards and quality of provision in RE
- Partnership with the local authority, schools, faith communities and other key stakeholders
- Monitoring the impact of the agreed syllabus
- Collective Worship
- RE and Social / Racial Harmony Agenda (now absorbed into the wider Community Cohesion Agenda).



All five dimensions are vital to SACREs especially the increasingly important role a SACRE plays in community cohesion. I would also add the key role a SACRE can play in the *Every Child Matters* Agenda, reflecting on how the RE curriculum can enrich - Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoyment and Achievement, Positive Contribution and Economic Well-being. The purpose of this article is to consider SACRE's role in developing two of these key strands

- Standards and Provision (linked to monitoring the impact of the Agreed Syllabus)
- Building partnerships (especially within SACRE).

It is hard to believe that many SACREs probably miss OFSTED ! The most recent OFSTED inspection framework swiftly brought to an end the important evidence of detailed judgements on all the subjects in the curriculum (even if SACREs may not have always agreed with these judgements on RE).



Under the current framework RE and / or collective worship may get, at best, a fleeting comment, usually on compliance issues. Instead OFSTED produces subject information in RE based on the inspection of sixty schools. While still valuable this is a much smaller evidence base (previously overall findings were based on around 6,000 schools) and could lead to observations which do not accurately reflect the full RE picture.

In this OFSTED 'void' what can SACREs do to monitor standards and review the impact of the Agreed Syllabus? I think there are two key activities.

1. Make full use of the really useful self-evaluation guidance on RE published by AREIAC and available on the REonline website (<http://betterre.reonline.org.uk/>) Devon SACRE sent the guidance to every school and produced a report based on the key findings. The self-evaluation guidance was particularly useful in establishing and responding to the RE INSET needs of schools. The current priorities in the Devon SACRE development plan also were based on key findings from the self-evaluation feedback.



2. Develop an evaluation of RE through visits to a sample selection of schools. This year Devon SACRE has encouraged schools to volunteer for a day's visit from the RE adviser and another SACRE member. The visit consists of a mixture of lesson observations, looking at children's work, talking with children and staff and reviewing RE documentation. During this academic year we will be visiting up to ten primary, secondary and special schools. In particular we will focus on the impact of the new Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Agreed Syllabus 'Every Child Matters In RE' and what schools find is working well / the areas for development. This will feed back into Devon SACRE and shape future thinking.

Building Partnerships

In many SACRE meetings there doesn't seem to be time to actually get to know one another, as people, or really develop SACRE member's (many of whom, especially in Group A, may not have direct links with education) understanding of key issues in RE and collective worship.

We have responded to this important issue in Devon SACRE in the following ways:-

- Producing a guide for new members of Devon SACRE on the key roles and functions of SACRE (a copy of this guidance is available on the NASACRE website).
- Changing our patterns of meetings so that we now meet for a full day, four times a year. The morning session is our business meeting and we then enjoy lunch together. The afternoon session is now a training opportunity for all SACRE members (and is often led by SACRE members). In the last two years training sessions have included sessions on:-
 - Collective Worship
 - Secondary Curriculum Review and the place of RE
 - Effective practice in teaching and learning in RE in the primary curriculum
 - Using starters and plenaries in RE in secondary schools
 - Visits and visitors in RE

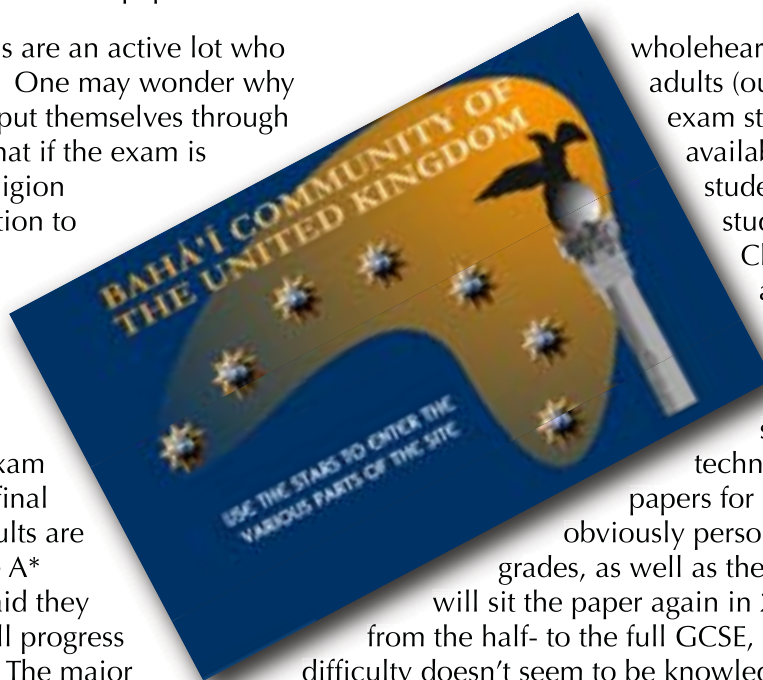
These are practical, 'hands-on' sessions which have been really appreciated by SACRE members. Our next steps include more opportunities for SACRE members to share their faith / belief and visit places of worship. Overall it has been really worthwhile to have the time and space to enrich our understanding of RE and SACRE members have really valued these training opportunities.

News From BREA

It must have seemed a strange sight to the teenagers in exam halls across the South East, small groups of thirty-, forty- and even seventy-somethings gathering anxiously to take their RE exam this summer. Not a hoody in sight, but still a nail-biting moment for some who were sitting their first exam in many years. Answering a challenge from BREA, they were trialing the EdExcel GCSE in Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith, a new option in EdExcel's comparative religion papers.

For anyone allergic to acronyms, BREA stands for the Bahá'í Religious Education Agency, a body established by the National Spiritual Assembly of the UK to represent Bahá'ís within the RE world. Currently composed of four members, all with SACRE / RE / educational experience on a national level, one of this year's projects has been to work with the Brent Bahá'í community to support people wishing to sit one or both papers.

The Brent Bahá'ís are an active lot who into this project. One may wonder why feel the need to put themselves through wider vision is that if the exam is Comparative Religion will have the option to alongside studies study groups evenings, BREA Vickers and Mrs supported the and discussed exam students sat the final GCSE. Exam results are there were some A* G. Some have said they grades, some will progress glad it's all over! The major application of that knowledge to specific questions. Some students were thrown by the paper not mentioning their Faith in the title – something BREA will address in training and materials for next year.



wholeheartedly threw themselves adults (our eldest was 74) would exam stress of this kind, but the available and used, students (of any background) study the Bahá'í Faith Christianity and have their acknowledged. In running on Saturdays and members Dr Stephen Lindsay Thorne students, shared materials techniques. Twenty-eight papers for either the half or full obviously personal but we know that grades, as well as the whole range from A to will sit the paper again in 2009 to improve their from the half- to the full GCSE, some are no doubt just difficulty doesn't seem to be knowledge of their Faith but to specific questions. Some students were thrown by the paper not mentioning their Faith in the title – something BREA will address in training and materials for next year.

The training for next year's exam starts in December, with study groups ranging from London to Cornwall, Oxfordshire to York. The age-range is also coming down with our first group of youngsters sitting this option in 2009. Eventually, we plan to develop materials to offer to the wider community for any / all RE students in Key Stage 4.

This was quite an audacious project for us, but reflects that the Baha'is need to be acknowledged as a distinct religious community. As 'Minority' faiths go, we are relatively small in numbers in this country, but make up for that in our enthusiasm and desire to work together with the RE and Education communities. There were a few teething problems in finding schools prepared to let external candidates sit exams, though again, as it becomes more usual these difficulties should disappear. In the meantime, this year's students will be having a well-deserved celebration at the end of November hosted, of course, by the Brent Bahá'í Community.

Please do contact BREA for materials, support and training on all aspects of the Bahá'í Faith – brea@bahai.org.uk the Baha'i community of the UK website can be found at www.bahai.org.uk

Debbie Tibbey (BREA)

NASACRE Recruitment and Training Project

Progress Report - October 2008

Work has begun on the project to recruit and train members of faith communities to fill vacancies on Group A of those SACREs in the designated regions. This year the areas we are working in are the Midlands (East and West); the NE with Yorkshire & Humber and (suddenly!) also London and bits of the SE region. The scope of the project had to be severely curtailed because of restricted funding and so this is the most effective way of spreading the benefits as widely as possible whilst still being manageable. We are aware, however, that all of these areas, comprising two government regions in each, are significantly larger than we would have chosen.

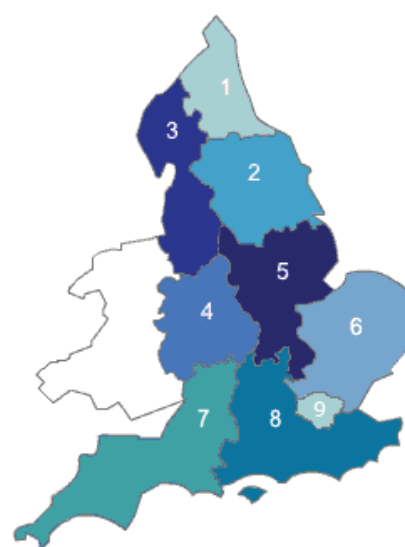
To date, briefing meetings for Chairs of SACRE and RE advisers have been held in York (for the NE), Solihull (for the Midlands) and London (for the SE). Attendance was good and news of the project was very well received. Local support for the recruitment and training has been identified and individuals signed up to fulfil that role. Dates have been identified for the training days and the details of spring term SACRE meetings collated in order to offer delegates the opportunity to attend a meeting as part of their training. Also integral to the experience is the chance to make an accompanied school visit to observe an RE lesson and plans are being laid for that aspect of the training. The training itself will take place in the spring term 2009.

In order to facilitate the recruitment, the NASACRE data bases have been maintained and brought up to date, whilst intensive research into local faith communities is on going. The current situation with regard to vacancies has been carefully checked with SACRE clerks.

The first meeting of the Partnership Group has been held to advise the R&T team. This is a gathering of individuals who represent nationally the faith communities from whom we need to recruit and their support will be invaluable. This too was a very positive occasion.

When additional funding recently became available, plans for this year's training were extended at short notice to include a third area, with training to be provided in two cohorts (London and some of the SACREs in the SE). As a result, the process of informing SACREs, holding a briefing meeting and setting about recruiting had to be rolled out a third time, but it was felt this was an opportunity not to be missed. The choice of region was made on the basis of the number of recorded vacancies.

On-going work includes booking venues, inviting contributions to each programme of training from a local adviser and an experienced member of Group A, and the completion of the rewrite of the booklet ***So You're Joining Your Local SACRE***. This latter will be finished in the next week and should be printed by the middle of November.



Julie Grove Secretary to NASACRE

FAITH & FUN TOGETHER - Lewisham SACRE's Project

When I looked back I decided that it was all Shaun's fault.

It was a SACRE meeting on a dark, miserable November evening in 2006. We'd had an interminable discussion about the SACRE budget and we'd worked on our self evaluation. For once it looked as if we'd be going home early. And then Shaun said, "As we've got a bit of time I'd like you all to hear about a project which John has led".



Shaun and John told us about the 'Big Year 6 Event' which John who is the priest at St George's Church and a school governor had organised for the Yr 6 children from four local Church of England primary schools. Taking place over two days it had combined creative activities with the opportunity for the children to explore their hopes and fears about transfer to secondary school. The focus of the event was a conference during which the children identified these hopes and fears and then discussed them with a panel of young people from local secondary schools. It was fascinating and someone (I'm told it was me) said "Wouldn't it be wonderful if the SACRE could do a multi faith version." With no access to a budget however it was clearly impossible.

And then of course the next round of the NASACRE/Westhill Trustees awards was announced. And of course we applied. When, at the NASACRE AGM, we heard that we'd won the full £5000 I had a moment of delight followed swiftly by sheer panic at the realisation that we now actually had to make it happen.

We formed a small organising committee which met at intervals over the following months and each of the members was allocated specific tasks. We decided to call the event 'Faith and Fun Together', faith and fun because those two words do not often appear in the same context and together because of the multi faith nature of the activities. We were extremely fortunate to be given exclusive use of Lewisham's Civic Suite for the whole two days of the event. The Mayor, Sir Steve Bullock, is a great supporter of the SACRE which eased matters considerably.

The Event:

Around fifteen Yr 6 children from each of five community primary schools and six Yr 6 children

from the local Mosque primary school were involved: about 80 children in all. We divided them into four groups mixing schools, gender and faiths.

We had four creative workshops: Circus Skills, Masks, Puppetry and Arts and Crafts. Each workshop lasted 45 minutes. Over the two days all the children attended all the workshops. We identified a leader for each group from the adults (teachers and support assistants) who had accompanied the children from each school and who stayed with them throughout the event. The leaders were given a schedule and a building plan so that they could move their groups on to the next activity at the appointed time. Members of the organising committee raced round the building indicating when it was time to move on. By what felt like a miracle none of the groups got lost and no groups turned up at the wrong place. One of my recurring nightmares was about a swirling mass of children all ending up at one workshop. Many of the adults joined in the activities: I shall particularly treasure the image of one of my colleagues getting completely tangled up in a bunch of scarves while trying to juggle them in the Circus Skills workshop.

On the afternoon of the Day 1 the children met a panel of pupils from local secondary schools together with the Deputy Young Mayor of Lewisham and two of her advisors. As preparation we asked the participating schools to work with the whole of their Yr 6 to identify questions and concerns, both faith related and general. Other questions were identified through an exercise on the day whereby after discussion the children placed 'post it' notes on the wall about both their hopes and their fears around secondary transfer. We hastily reorganised the notes into broad themes. The panel then answered questions about their own experience of starting secondary school.

Some of the matters raised by the children were predictable: bullying/violence was, sadly, an overwhelming concern. Some of the anxieties about bullying were general; others were specifically about religious matters. We had some surprises. For instance we had expected dress and modesty to be raised especially in relation to games and P.E. This was not mentioned. On the other hand the children debated rules about wearing religious jewellery at some length. This was before the high profile case about a Sikh girl's right to wear her bracelet at school

hit the headlines. We had not anticipated this and yet it is clearly something which is on the mind of many children. "Scary dinner ladies" were cited by a number of children as a fear: it emerged that this was mainly about being forced to eat food which was forbidden for religious reasons. Some children of no faith were moving on to faith secondary schools and were worried about being forced to participate in religious worship. The thoughtful discussion about this showed understanding and acceptance across the faith groups. We have produced a booklet for all Lewisham schools and for the many out borough secondary schools to whom our children transfer. The booklet sets out the discussions and concerns raised about secondary transfer. We hope that this will help schools in the future with their transition work.

On Day 2 the children visited six 'Faith Homes' set up by SACRE members representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The staff of the Civic Suite had the somewhat unusual experience of streams of faith representatives appearing early in the morning, some in full formal dress, carrying sacred objects, food and robes. They created six magical areas representing their own faith and culture which the four groups visited for 15 minutes each.

We called this exercise 'Planet Passport'. Our theme of transition was about a journey from one phase of a child's life to the next: equally, visiting different faith areas was another kind of journey. Every child was



sent a passport before the event to complete with information about themselves. The four groups were named Air Pluto, Air Saturn, Air Venus and Air Mars, representing imaginary airlines.

At each faith home, the children's passports were stamped with a symbol and a word or phrase for

'Welcome' chosen by the faith representatives who also signed the passports. At the start of the day each group was issued with 'airline' tickets of different colours depending on which home they were visiting: these were handed in on arrival at the 'home' and then at the end of each visit they received tickets for the next 'home'.

That exercise stretched us to the limit: we had somewhat underestimated the logistics of stamping and signing 20-odd passports within the time available! Moving the children round between visits



was considerably eased by the staff at the Civic Suite who were kindly allowed to appropriate the Hindu bell and rang it loudly at the specified times.

The final session on the second day was a rehearsal and then demonstration by the children of the skills learned in the workshops. The demonstrations were interspersed by presentations from each of the six faiths represented in the 'homes'. Robin Kanarek, our NASACRE Executive link representative, was rather startled to be asked at about 15 minutes notice to give the presentation representing Judaism as our Jewish colleague had struggled in to run her 'home' but had to go home ill afterwards. Robin rose magnificently to the occasion.

The final event was another one that had given me nightmares. In the full flush of enthusiasm we had decided to end by going outside the Civic Suite and releasing doves, the universal symbol of peace. Six children, one from each school, each held a dove and at the appropriate moment, released them. Then another twelve doves were released from a basket by a group of children. Contrary to my fears, no doves were strangled by an over enthusiastic grip and no doves flew into the path of the many buses driving round this very busy major road junction. "Oh ye of little faith" murmured a colleague as I heaved a sigh of relief.

Each school group took home a banner made in the Arts and Crafts workshop and I understand these were greeted with great enthusiasm by teachers who used them to form the basis of an Act of Collective Worship. We also gave the schools wooden doves for all the Yr 6 children. All the adults involved also



received doves: Robin tells me that she has hers on her desk.

Did everything run smoothly? Well, the two days ran like clockwork. Moving groups of children and adults around the unfamiliar territory of the Civic Suite was fraught with potential problems but we had planned it down to the last minute. As one of the teachers said to me approvingly but somewhat inappropriately given the subject matter, "The devil is in the detail". In the run up to the event there were inevitable hiccups. Like the fact that June 10th, the first day, was the second of two Jewish High Holy days. In our defence, the calendar we used only gave one day, June 9th. And our Jewish representative did not realise it either until she checked her diary. As we had planned the Faith Homes element for the first day we had to completely rearrange the programme with about a month's notice. That was the point when I briefly contemplated retiring to bed, covering my head with the duvet and refusing to come out until it was all over. And then there was the Saturday evening two days before the event when our R.E Adviser (known to you all as the current chair of NASACRE, Denise Chaplin) and I sat for five hours at my dining room table surrounded by 'plane tickets' and timetables, working out how to move four groups of children round six faith homes. At one point we had

one group visiting the same faith home three times. I seem to remember we both become slightly hysterical at that moment.

Was it worth it? Oh yes. The profile of the SACRE was raised within the council: we had visits from elected members and the Mayor as well as various council officers. We have established a close link with the Young Mayor's office which we shall maintain and which we hope will give us the opportunity to involve young people in our work. We've produced our booklet which we hope will be of use to the schools. There are wonderful photos taken over the two days by a Muslim SACRE member who is a professional photographer. We've had very positive feedback from the participating schools. One boy ran to his head teacher when he returned to school and said, "I've had the best two days of my *whole life*". Members of the SACRE worked closely together before and during the event. Children of all faiths and



no faith mixed together exploring issues of common concern and showed in many cases sensitivity to each other's issues. The children gained experience of different faiths which we hope will support and extend the work which they carry out in R.E. They also, to the delight of the faith representatives, demonstrated a good knowledge of the different religions. I shall treasure the moment when a boy (not a Hindu) gravely told our Hindu representative the story of Ganesh and his parents.

None of this would have been possible without the grant from NASACRE/Westhill Trustees; we offer our gratitude to all those involved in awarding it to us.

Dinah **Griffiths**, Chair of Lewisham SACRE

Snakes and Ladders, symbol and metaphor

28th-July - 1st August, 2008: Acton High School

During the last week in July 2008, twenty-eight children from eight Ealing primary schools attended a summer school for pupils who are gifted and talented in religious education. The pupils, aged 9-11, were nominated by their school, and the event was sponsored by Ealing Council and MITIE Group, who generously provided accommodation in the new Acton High School.

The purpose of the four-day event was to stretch the pupils with a challenging set of activities. Topics covered included signs, symbols and metaphor, the human response to the ups and downs of life, an introduction to the Jain religion and the mythic role of snakes in a variety of traditions.



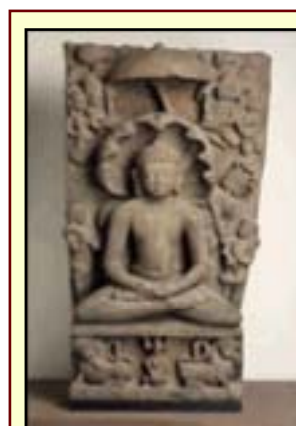
During breaks participants had the opportunity to play a modern version of the snakes and ladders game.

The game of snakes and ladders originated in India, and there are Hindu, Muslim and Jain examples. The Jain version *gyanbazi* ('game of knowledge') was used to teach the Jain code of ethics. The earliest version that appeared in Britain also focussed on moral education: the virtues, in the shape of ladders, allowed the players to reach heaven quickly, whereas the snakes represented vices for which the players were punished by having to move backwards

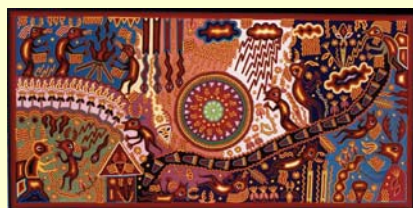
For people brought up in the Judaeo-Christian or Muslim traditions it is no surprise that snakes with their role in the

Garden of Eden story have been associated with evil. However these animals have also been linked to healing and wisdom (ancient Greece) and eternity (ancient Egypt). And in the Jain tradition the serpent king Dharanendra and his wife Padmavati are often represented protecting the Jina Parsvanatha. Across human history snakes have been seen as symbolic of a wide range of things; it was one of the tasks of the summer school that pupils were asked to explore this phenomenon both in a research project and also during a trip to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Taking the snakes and ladders schematic as a starting point we also looked at other types of 'mythic map', for instance Aboriginal song-lines paintings and the yarn painting of the Huichol Indians inspired by experiences of the vision-inducing peyote cactus. The main project of the summer school required each participant to create a life-map based loosely on the snakes and ladders theme. However, instead of vignettes where misbehaviour leads to sliding down a snake, and ladders allow one to advance closer to heaven, these symbolic maps were meant to represent the reality of the ups and downs of an individual's life, without placing a burden on the pupil to link these experiences to moral causes. The exercise was also intended to get them to think about the things that sustained them through difficult times. Thus they were encouraged to include figures that they would like to appear as helpers and guides: for instance, animals symbolising certain qualities such as endurance, or the ability to roar like a lion, a talent that might be useful when confronted with an ordeal such as bullying.



7th Century sandstone sculpture of the Jina Parsvanatha in the Victoria and Albert Museum



"Path to Wirkuta"

Huichol yarn painting. In Huichol belief, Wirkuta is the sacred land of the ancestors.

www.mythicjourneys.org

On the first day pupils were paired for a project that they had to research on the Internet. The title for their project was drawn from topics such as "Islam and ecology" and "The snake in ancient Egypt". Each group was given a set of keywords to start them on their search. While half the class were at Ealing City Learning Centre using the computers, the other half were being prepared for the trip to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

This excursion to one of the greatest British museums gave participants a chance to explore artwork from a variety of traditions. Before the start of the tour they were encouraged to view each exhibit as a personal response to something that had moved the individual artist—just as it was hoped they would be inspired in the creation of their maps. The V&A's collection

contains a wide variety of artefacts with snakes or serpent motifs, and there were chances to see this animal portrayed as dangerous, worthy adversary, protector, enemy, symbol of temptation, symbol of wisdom and symbol of eternity. The pupils were also asked to write a brief story inspired by the powerful evocation of a confrontation of a man and a python in a statue by Lord Leighton.

Another highlight of the week's activities was the visit by Syon Park's Tropical Forest Road Show during which pupils had the opportunity to compare the mythic portrayals of serpents they had researched and seen at the museum with their living, breathing counterparts. Tony and Alice Purdy brought a selection of snakes that we were allowed to touch and hold. This proved to be one of the most popular of the summer school activities, and many of the pupils mentioned overcoming their fear as the most important thing they had learned.



A trip to nearby Mill Hill Park presented participants with an opportunity to consider the vicissitudes of life in a scientific, rather than mythic, context when members of the Acton Rangers team, Pat Robinson and Andrej Witkowski, answered questions about life cycles in nature.



Athlete wrestling a python
Lord Frederick Leighton, 1877

The final day of the summer school was devoted to the completion of their projects and presentation of the results of their research. It was fascinating to see the various symbolic means pupils used to map significant incidents in their lives. For instance, a few chose to represent their lives as a house, with windows opening onto different episodes. One pupil utilised the imagery of the snakes and ladders game; another employed whorls of yarn in a manner reminiscent of the Huichol vision paintings. Many included images of helping animals or spirits they would look to for solace or guidance, some of them mythic, others beloved pets. For all of us it was a meaningful experience to share the maps and hear the stories that were memorialised in these works of art. And it was not just ordeals that were depicted in the maps; high points included going on the underground for the first time, winning a sports trophy and riding a hot air balloon. One pupil even included her summer school name-badge to indicate that she considered the experience to be one of the high points of her life.

Nora Leonard - adviser to Ealing SACRE

REVIEW

The Jewish Way of Life (Interactive CD Rom).
For information and guidance visit www.jwol.org.uk



This CD-ROM, which was circulated free of charge by *RE Today* (autumn 2008) issue and is available free from Board of Deputies of British Jews, 6 Bloomsbury Square, London, WC1A 2LP, is intended to be used, mainly with key stage 2 but is suitable across the age range from 7-14.

There are three parts to the CD Rom entitled, *Who we are*, *What we believe*, *What we do*.

It is very well set out and offers a rich variety of material and is based around David and Sarah who provide much of the commentary. There are good visuals both still and video clips, lots of lovely Jewish music and one of the highlights for this reviewer is the placing of the Jewish Way of Life firmly within a real community living in 21st century Britain-indeed there is an interesting section on this under the heading of *Who we are*.

The CD Rom is easy to use, whether by the teacher for the whole class or for individual and group work.

It is a lovely resource, rich, varied, contemporary and a great introduction to the living faith of Judaism. Highly recommended.

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SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ...

December

8th: Bodhi Day
 9th: Eid-ul-Adha
 22nd-29th: Hanukah
 24th: Christmas Eve
 25th: Christmas Day
 26th: St. Stephen's Day
 26th: Zartushino-Diso

January

1st: Circumcision of Jesus
 1st: Shinto
 6th: Epiphany
 6th: 10th Tevet










7th: Orthodox Christmas Day
 7th: Ashura
 14th: Makar Sankrant
 18th-24th: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
 27th: Losar
 27th: Holocaust Memorial Day

February

2nd: Candlemas
 8th: Parinirvana
 9th: B'Shevat
 14th: St. Valentine's Day
 24th: Shrove Tuesday
 25th: Ash Wednesday

ON THE WEBSITE ...

Do keep an eye on the website where you will find:

-  News updates
-  Information about NASACRE
-  News about events
-  News on projects
-  The Newsletter Archive
-  The FAQ archive
-  Agenda items for your next SACRE meetings
-  A membership list
-  Exemplar documentation



As you will have read above we hope that you will check and update the membership section and add to the exemplar documentation. Contact us at web@nasacre.org.uk

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