



South Gloucestershire SACRE Annual Report 2020-2021



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1. Introduction

1.1 Words from the Chair

There is no denying that once again the pandemic has had a major impact on the lives and work of all of us involved with education. The challenges we face have been extreme and the impact on our schools is very evident. Our thanks to school leaders, all staff and parents for working tirelessly under the most difficult COVID restrictions to deliver quality education face to face and online. Our thanks extend to SACRE members who have given their time and expertise tirelessly to support the work that we do. This has been greatly appreciated

NASCARE produced a report in May 2021 on the funding received by SACRE, which highlighted some disparities in the system; with some Local Authorities funding appearing to be as little as £105. In South Gloucestershire this is not the case, and the funding exceeds the SACRE mean average of £11000. We are well supported financially by the Local Authority and the officers who play an active role in our work. We will always strive to provide value for money.

It's been a year of changes. Sadly, we said goodbye to Adam Robertson our talented and dedicated Advisor who brought such expertise to our work. We welcomed Katy Staples support as interim advisor. We look forward to Laura Harris joining us next year.

The time had come to look again at our Agreed Syllabus, and it was decided after a consultation to continue with the existing model but with additions and amendments. This was influenced by the major changes facing schools at this time and the fact that the existing syllabus was perceived positively by the practitioners implementing it on the ground.

It was decided that the SACRE Constitution was in need of revision to better fulfil its functions, particularly in the diversity of the membership. We are always ready to look at the way we work and embrace change.

It was pleasure to take part in the NASACRE Conference sharing the very successful work we do in schools with the Wire Award. This has been enthusiastically accepted by schools and we look forward to the Gold Award presentations.

We are looking forward to the return of normality in our schools and delivering quality Religious Education to our children and young people.

Jane Allinson Chair of SACRE

1.2 Overview – SACRE

A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is legally constituted by a Local Authority with the responsibility for overseeing Religious Education and Collective Worship in community, VC (RE only not CW), foundation schools without a religious character and trust schools.

Academies, Free schools & VA schools lie outside the SACRE remit, but a good SACRE will try to establish links with any of these schools in its area.

SACRE has met three times in the last academic year. All meetings were held online using video conferencing. Autumn and Spring meetings were well attended. Summer (July) meeting was not quorate due to lack of Group C (councillors) being present.

In meetings the following aspects were discussed:

- Agreed Syllabus review and funding, suggested RE resources
- SACRE constitution and membership
- HIVE project
- Covid 19 impact and support for schools
- OFSTED research review
- RE conferences
- SACRE conferences
- support for individual schools
- religion and worldviews (and its potential impact on teaching of RE)

1.3 Overview – Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)

South Gloucestershire SACRE adopted RE Today syllabus A in 2016. In this reporting period we have been reviewing our agreed syllabus. An agreed syllabus working party met and debated whether to keep the current agreed syllabus or to consider an alternative syllabus.

In discussions, some concerns were raised at the timing of a change of syllabus, given the context of the Covid pandemic. There was also evidence that the change in Ofsted framework which had seen changes in other curriculum areas meant in the context of RE that some consolidation was needed rather than change. Other members raised questions around the longevity and suitability of the current syllabus and whether something more bespoke could be developed.

As the current agreed syllabus has only been in place five years and considering the many improvements that have resulted in RE practice across our schools, comments were made that a change at this current time would be detrimental to staff wellbeing, in the context of managing a new change but also in the progress in RE teaching where we have seen improvement.

A decision to engage with a relicensing of the existing syllabus was then agreed through a formal vote by SACRE. This process is now underway and the updated syllabus will be shared with schools in March 2022.

2. Religious Education

2.1 Locally Agreed Syllabus

The locally agreed syllabus in schools is RE Today syllabus A. In the main this has been adopted by most schools across the authority, including academies. A number of Church of England Schools (VC and VA) also use the Understanding Christianity resource which is recommended by their Diocese.

Teachers have been consulted on the Agreed Syllabus review via a survey sent to all schools. Feedback was generally very positive, teachers reported that the planning was of high quality and met the needs of all pupils well.

Information was requested from secondary schools on their provision for RE. Details and comments from schools were provided detailing the curriculum offer for KS3-5 and the exam boards used.

2.2 Monitoring

Covid 19 has posed a considerable challenge to SACRE's usual monitoring processes. Exam data for the last academic year is unavailable due to the changes to assessment processes during the pandemic which means results are not published. There are therefore no validated results for either GCSE and/or A Levels, however we expect national data to be published in 2022 and therefore this should be shared in the 2021-2022 SACRE report appendix.

SACRE members and the adviser have been unable to visit schools in this period due to Covid regulations and also have been mindful of the extreme pressures and difficulties faced by schools at this time.

Support was offered to schools through the adviser writing and sharing guidance on home learning activities for RE which was available via the Local Authority portal. There is evidence from the feedback we have received from schools that the guidance and activities were useful and accessed appropriately.

2.3 The WIRE Award

The Widening Inclusivity in Religious Education (WIRE) award continues to be an important project for South Gloucestershire SACRE. To achieve the WIRE award a school must:

- Send a teacher to at least one continuing professional development (CPD) opportunity for RE. This could be the conference, or a local RE hub.

- Put on a 'faith day' or a celebration of RE to which a local SACRE member can be invited. Or a school might enter a national RE competition.
- Take pupils on a visit to a place of worship that is not the majority religion of their school. For many schools in South Gloucestershire, this will mostly be from a faith other than Christianity.

The award has been created to further SACRE's priority to encourage mutual understanding of different faiths, and to break down stereotypes and barriers.

To enable schools to achieve the award, SACRE decided to provide a portion of its budget to offer up to 50% travel grant to schools to enable them to lower the costs of the trip for parents/carers. This has continued to be available during this reporting period, but Covid19 has resulted in an underspend in this budget which will be carried over into the next academic year.

During this period, it has also been difficult for schools to apply for the WIRE award, due to limitations for school visits and engagement with religious communities. However, one school has received the award (Abbotswood Primary School) and the programme appears to be resuming with promise for this academic year.

Further to many schools having received the WIRE award, the WIRE award 'Gold' has now been created. To achieve the gold award schools will extend their already good practice in RE to complete tasks that are focused on extending their impact, working with parents, communities and other schools and teachers. Many teachers in the area have expressed an interest and enthusiasm for taking on this challenge in the year ahead.

2.4 South Gloucestershire Learn, Teach, Lead RE Hub

This project is in its fifth year and aims to develop leaders of RE in both primary and secondary schools, as well as providing networking and CPD for all local teachers of RE. Hub leaders get access to high quality training and facilitate three hubs per year aimed at both primary and secondary teachers, and teaching assistants.

South Gloucestershire SACRE has used some of its budget to support the development of the hubs. Rebekah Guy – subject lead for RE at St Barnabas CE Primary, Warmley is the Hub leader and convenor. Adam Robertson, SACRE adviser, helped to organise the meetings in this reporting year and the new adviser to SACRE, Laura Harris will continue to do so in the coming year.

South Gloucestershire hub has continued to meet online throughout the last year. Teachers have received input in the three sessions on worldviews, the links between RE and RSHE and the OFSTED research review.

2.5 Annual conference

The annual RE conference was held online in January 2020 and the theme was 'No single story'. 66 members of staff from the South Gloucs area accessed a place at the conference online. The focus was on ensuring teachers share diverse representations of belief and practice within and across religions and worldviews. Ed Pawson and Katie Freeman presented key notes on Primary worldviews curriculum and the use of story to create inclusive RE. Workshops for all key stages giving practical ideas on worldviews in the classroom, as well as sessions on Hindu Dharma and Islam were presented. Feedback on the conference was very positive and teachers were keen to take the ideas and suggestions back their classrooms.

Some feedback from teachers attending:

'Lovely ideas - that can be also used and adapted for many different areas of the curriculum - thank you'

'Thank you, this was really interesting and helpful as a new RE lead'

'Thank you so much. I have lots of ideas now and I am eager to share them across my school'

'Lovely to see such a focus on practical and creative ideas - love the forest school ones! Thank you!'

2.6 LTLRE conference

This blended conference was held at Engineers' House in June 2021, with 20 delegates attending in person and 46 online. The title 'This is my truth tell me yours', with presentations from keynote speakers Ruth Flanagan and Richard Kueh, presented current thinking around worldviews and diversity in RE. Teachers took part in a variety of workshops including interpreting stories, disagreeing well in the classroom, reflective stories and the animation resource 'Nobody Stands Nowhere'. Despite a few technical difficulties both online and face to face attendees gave positive feedback to the event. Those able to attend in person were grateful of the opportunity to meet in person with colleagues, and those online were appreciative of the chance to receive presentations and workshops despite being unable to attend the event physically.

Some feedback on the event:

'I appreciated being able to attend this conference online. I felt just as much a part of the conference as if I had been there in person... I got so much from it and I can't wait to start implementing the great ideas I picked up from this day'

'I was very impressed with how the conference was able to provide this blended option – a definite blueprint for the future if available for people who would wish to attend but can't in person. Intermittent use of break out rooms used effectively, in similar way you would provide opportunities for discussion face to face. Interesting and engaging speakers. Any technical issues that occurred were dealt with promptly – great team! I also really enjoyed balance of contributors / workshops I chose. Encouragement and time to reflect pedagogy / own practise / own ideas - in morningpractical ideas for classroom in the afternoon'

2.7 The HIVE project

This project continues to be a hugely positive and exciting piece of work for South Gloucestershire SACRE. Using a successful bid from Culham St Gabriel's trust, as well as SACRE and LA contributions, Adam Robertson, previous SACRE adviser and Andrew Best, Strategic Lead for Education Improvement and Commissioning created a project called the 'RE Hive'. The idea is to use the existing cluster system for school improvement, which is very well established. The aim is for a school with expertise in each cluster to work with the SACRE adviser to coach and build capacity in teaching and learning in other cluster schools, thus developing middle leadership. Schools will work in small groups together to look at their curriculums and share best practice. The successful bid was for £9525, with an additional £5000 from SACRE and £1200 from the local authority. The funding will be used to provide supply cover for teachers, cover advisers time on the project, support schools in applying for the RE Quality Mark (REQM) and to allow teachers to access RE subject development courses.

Despite the continued challenges of the pandemic guidance and changes, RE leaders from 10 cluster areas have been successfully appointed and attended LTLRE hub meetings this year to network with other schools and develop their subject knowledge. Several of the leaders made contact with their two local schools and two managed to meet together to begin the journey of auditing, improving and assessing RE provision. At the beginning of the 2021-22 academic year, adviser Laura Harris has renewed contact with each of the leaders, who have agreed to continue the project and contact their designated schools before Christmas 2021. Progress reports to the funding provider will be submitted in December 2021.

2.8 Communication

Termly newsletters have continued, with all schools receiving a SACRE newsletter three times per year. The newsletter contains contact details for various communities and resources, as well as ideas for the classroom and information on upcoming events and CPD.

2.9 School support

During Covid times and ongoing, all schools have been offered the opportunity of 1:1 support from the adviser. Several schools have accessed a 1.5-2-hour adviser led session supporting them with the development of RE and/or collective worship.

3. Collective worship

3.1 Policies and guidance

SACRE developed the current collective worship guidance in 2018. Additional guidance was created during this year for schools to provide and lead collective worship from home during the lockdown periods and on returning to school under Covid19 guidelines.

3.2 Monitoring and support

Support was provided for schools in how to manage collective worship in school in line with current regulations. (Appendix E) CPD sessions were also offered. During this reporting period it has only been appropriate for SACRE to provide guidance and support and not monitoring and scrutiny. Schools have shared their appreciation for the support offered.

3.3 Determinations

During this reporting period there were no determinations applied for.

4. Links with other organisations

4.1 NASACRE

South Gloucestershire SACRE continues to maintain its membership to the National Association of SACREs. This provides access to important updates on national issues and the use of recommended templates for policies and guidance documents. SACRE members were invited to attend the NASACRE AGM on 24th May. The theme of the event was 'Authority in RE', with keynote speakers Denise Kush and Richard Kueh presenting on 'sources of authority in RE' and RE and OFSTED. A variety of workshops were available on subjects such as bringing faith communities into the classroom, lesson plans for the Big Ideas project and what makes a text sacred. South Gloucestershire SACRE was represented by adviser Adam Robertson and Chair Jane Allinson, who ran a workshop about the WIRE award, sharing the principles and successes of the initiative with other SACREs.

4.2 LTLRE

As outlined above, South Gloucestershire SACRE continues to have significant commitment and practical involvement with the Learn, Teach, Lead RE programme.

The Adviser to SACRE assists in the planning and running of meetings and communicates with hub members regularly with RE updates and information via email. She is also on the steering committee for the project.

4.3 CtSG

Strong relationships with Culham St Gabriels Trust exist thanks to the link between the adviser and the organisation. As shared above, a funding agreement is currently in place from the trust for the HIVE project. Previous and existing adviser have both completed Stage 1 and Stage 2 respectively of the trust's Teach: RE leadership programme.

4.4. Diocese

SACRE maintains strong working relationships with the Church of England Bristol and Gloucester diocese. Through contractual agreements, the adviser to SACRE is also a schools adviser for Bristol Diocese and as such a large amount of goodwill and RE development takes place in South Gloucestershire through this connection. Church schools are able to ensure continuity and consistency in their support and advice for RE, and community schools are able, through contractual arrangements to access 2-hour sessions of support time as requested and arranged. Nine schools in the authority fall within Gloucester Diocese, and the adviser to SACRE maintains good channels of communication with the education team there to ensure consistency of support and opportunities for all schools.

4.5 Other local involvement

Governor training – SACRE usually provides governor training on a least an annual basis. This has not happened in this reporting period, largely due to pandemic related disruption, but is planned for the year ahead. This can take place face to face and/or online.

Regional SACRE conference – this was held online this year due to Covid restrictions. Delegates joined in discussions around how SACRE were coping and continuing to work during the pandemic, listened to a presentation from Farid Panjwani on 'decolonising the curriculum' and also a presentation from Richard Kueh, HMI, on how SACREs can learn from the summer OFSTED and reports on RE from OFSTED.

5. SACRE arrangements

5.1 Organisation

Chair – Jane Allinson (jandrallinson@icloud.com)

Clerk - Hannah Wood (Hannah.Wood@southglos.gov.uk)

Local Authority link officers – Liz Thomas and Andrew Best Liz Thomas
(Liz.Thomas@southglos.gov.uk & andrew.best@southglos.gov.uk)

Adviser – Laura Harris (laura.harris@bristoldiocese.org) (previously Adam Robertson)

5.2 Membership

As reported in the introduction, one meeting in this period was not quorate due to in attendance of Group C – councillors. Previous meetings were quorate and better attended with 20 and 21 members present.

In the March 2021 meeting, Alex Howard was welcomed formally onto the SACRE as a member of committee A, as a humanist representative. The SACRE recognised this change (having previously been a non-voting co-opted member) as the beginning of an inclusive outlook for the constitution.

Further recruitment for representation is needed on Group A, as there are several communities locally that currently are not represented on the SACRE.

Members of SACRE April 2020 - April 2021:

Committee A: Christian and other religious denominations

6 / 7 Members

Jane Allinson (Chair)

Ramila Patel

April Begley

Mohammed-Nassir Miah

Iris Segall

Chris John

Alex Howard

Committee B – Church of England

Up to 3 members

Ruth Wallace

Malcolm Strange

Committee C – teachers nominated by the South Gloucestershire TCC

Up to 6 members:

Claire Evans

Andy Spens

Jo Hachani
Jane Stockton
Kath English
Nik Baykaa-Murray

Committee D – Local Authority representatives
Up to 3 members

Cllr Mike Drew
Cllr Ben Stokes
Cllr Keith Walker

Committee E – non voting co-opted
Up to 6 members

Roger Allinson
Mike Riches
Chris Selway