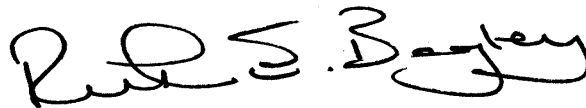


Date of issue: 31st January, 2012

MEETING	STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DATE AND TIME:	WEDNESDAY, 8TH FEBRUARY, 2012 AT 4.30 PM
VENUE:	RUBY 5, THE CENTRE, FARNHAM ROAD, SLOUGH, BERKSHIRE SL1 4UT
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	SIMON FULLWOOD 01753 875015

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



RUTH BAGLEY
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
	Apologies for absence.	
1.	Minutes of the last meeting held on 12th, October 2011	1 - 4
2.	Matters arising	-
3.	Membership - verbal update	-

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
4.	RE Trail - verbal update - Lynda Bussley	-
5.	2010/11 SACRE Report	5 - 20
6.	NASACRE - verbal update - Jo Fageant	-
7.	RE Teacher Weekend - Jo Fageant	21 - 38
8.	Budget - verbal update	-
9.	Development Plan - to include discussion on available underspend	-
10.	Joint SACREs Conference 2012	-
11.	Date of next meeting	

Press and Public

You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before the Committee considers any items in the Part II agenda. Special facilities may be made available for disabled or non-English speaking persons. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer shown above for further details.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Wednesday, 12th October, 2011.

Present:-

Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Sue Elbrow (Free Churches), Vijay Gupta (Hinduism, attending as deputy)

Committee 2 – Church of England

Andrew Allen, Alan Bignell, Jo Fageant and Christine Isles

Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations

Lynda Bussley (NUT)

Committee 4 – Representatives of the Local Authority

Councillors Bains, Basharat and M S Mann

Apologies for Absence:- None

PART 1

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Resolved:- That Jo Fageant be re-elected Chair and Lynda Bussley be elected Vice Chair for the year 2011/12.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 14/06/2011

The minutes of the meeting held of 14th June 2011 were held to be a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

4. Membership update

The Clerk provided the panel with a list of members and vacancies. It was noted that four representatives had been identified via Julie Siddiqi and the Muslim Community Forum and these would be appointed to the SACRE before the next meeting. Representatives to fill vacancies from Teacher Associations would also be sought.

5. RE Trail update (Lynda Bussley)

The members were updated on the progress of the RE Trail. Lynda Bussley explained that the mosaic is currently being worked on by Year 6 children in Chalvey and a leaflet is in the process of being printed.

6. CPD update (discussion of plans for shared meetings with RBWM)

The Chair outlined the possibility of collaboration with other authorities for professional development courses organised by the Diocese of Oxford. There are three courses upcoming, covering the syllabus review, Art & RE and Global Citizenship. The cost of these courses would be £100 pounds per head.

Resolved:- That the SACRE advise the Local Authority to look into partnership with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and other authorities in Berkshire with a view to enlist teaching staff on development courses.

7. NASACRE news (Jo Fageant)

The Chair advised that the panel wait until after the appointment of new representatives to the Slough SACRE that the SACRE assess sections of NASACRE guidance. Also, it noted that NASACRE guidance would inform the upcoming Annual Syllabus Review in Slough.

Members were informed by the Chair that current issues for NASACRE are the omission of RE from the English Baccalaureate. There are also concerns that support to SACREs is diminishing as a result of cuts to Local Authority budgets.

It was also noted that the Chair, Jo Fageant is also a member of the NASACRE board and so will update the Slough SACRE on any developments.

8. Joint SACREs Conference Report

The Joint SACREs Conference Report was noted by the membership. This was the result of a recent conference held in Reading, attended by around 200 delegates.

The members were encouraged by the positive response regarding teachers' confidence with the syllabus. However, concerns were raised whether this was a reliable, as the responses had been not gathered from many schools. During discussion it was felt that the future syllabus, when distributed to schools, would benefit from having a sheet explaining the role of the teacher in Religious Education.

Also noted was a survey released by the Office for National Statistics in 2010, which found 93% of people in the Slough said they had a religious affiliation, the highest in the country.

9. Annual SACRE report

The draft Annual SACRE Report was discussed and possible amendments discussed. It was noted that Members were not able to easily interpret tables

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 12.10.11

and diagrams contained within the report without a representative from the Local Authority's Education Department present at the meeting.

Resolved:- That amendments be made and a final report be sent to NASACRE and the Secretary of State for Education before the end of the year.

10. SACRE Development Plan (outline to be tabled at the meeting - Jo Fageant)

The Chair tabled the SACRE Development Plan. The proposed SACRE newsletter was discussed, with agreement that a termly newsletter informing local RE teachers of the work of the SACRE.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday, 8th February 2012.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 5.35 pm)

This page is intentionally left blank

Slough
Sstanding
Adsvisory
Council on
Religious
Education

Annual report

2010/11

Contents

Foreword by the Chair.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Meetings and membership.....	3
The Slough context.....	5
Religious Education.....	7
Collective worship.....	8
Links with other bodies.....	8
Budget and professional support.....	8
Appendix 1 - The Legal Context.....	9
Appendix 2 - Constitution and Terms of Reference.....	11
Appendix 3 - Membership and Attendance Record.....	13
Appendix 4 - Provisional Exam Results 2010/11.....	14

Foreword

This has been an eventful year with some successes and some considerable sadnesses.

Our exhibition of artwork on a range of themes relating to religion and spirituality generously held at St Mary's Church was a great success. It was seen by a great number of people who were impressed with children's ideas. Media coverage drew attention to this event and the work and value of the SACRE.

In contrast, the necessary closure of the Religious Studies Resources Centre was a disappointment. It is, in part, evidence of the increased resources available in individual schools and the changing nature of the materials used with the expansion of what is easily available on the internet.

The great sadness of the year, however, was the death of our Vice Chair, Jo Osborne. For many years Jo served the SACRE with enthusiasm and commitment. She always had the interests of teachers of RE at heart and did great work to support them, especially through her role running the RS Resources Centre. She will be greatly missed.

The SACRE is aware that next year, as members also serve on the Agreed Syllabus Conference, that it has much to do with the review of the Slough RE syllabus on the horizon. Members welcome the involvement and comments of teachers in this and all its endeavours.

Jo Fageant

Chair of Slough SACRE

2010/11

Introduction

Slough Borough Council became a Unitary Authority with responsibility for education on 1st April, 1998. The Slough Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) was established from that date. This report covers the period 1st September, 2010 to 31st August, 2011 and represents the tenth full year of SACRE's work.

Meetings and membership

SACRE met three times during the 2010/11 academic year on 13th October, 9th February and 14th June. Two meetings took place at the Town Hall and one at the St. Anthony's RC Primary School.

Dennis Kitchener (Senior Adviser, Standards and Achievement) provided officer support to SACRE throughout the year. Jo Fageant was elected Chair for the 2010/11 academic year.

In May 2010 the Authority appointed the following Councillors to serve as its representatives for the 2010/11 municipal year:

- Bains
- Maclsaac
- Mann
- Munawer

During the 2010/11 academic year no new members were appointed to Slough SACRE. At the time of preparation of this report there remained vacancies for representatives of the Black Free Churches, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. Efforts were made during the year to appoint members of local religious groups and progress was made, particularly in appointing representatives from the local Islamic and Sikh community.

Due to the departure of Councillor Maclsaac in May 2011, there is one vacancy for a representative from the Local Authority. Vacancies remain for representatives from teacher associations .

A full list of members together with their attendance records is attached as Appendix 3.

Jo Osborne

Jo Osborne who for many years ran the Religious Studies Resource Centre, most recently hosted by the Iqra School, and was an enthusiastic member of the SACRE serving as vice chair for several years died during the year of this report. Members were deeply saddened by her loss and expressed their great appreciation for all her commitment and the work she did on behalf of the SACRE.

The Slough context

The Slough Unitary Authority area comprises 119,070 persons (2001 Census). The total school population of Slough, excluding independent schools, was 24,591 as counted in the 2011 School Census. The following schools are situated within the Slough area:-

Primary

Community	13
Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided	5
Sikh Voluntary Aided	1
Islamic Voluntary Aided	1
Church of England Voluntary Controlled Foundation	2
Academy	5
Total Primary	28

Secondary

Community - Non-Selective Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided - Selective	2
Roman Catholic Special Agreement - Non-Selective Foundation - Selective	1
Foundation - Non-Selective	1
Academy	1
Total Secondary	11

Special

Primary	1
Primary and Secondary	1
Secondary	1
Total Special	3

It will be noted that the secondary education system in Slough is somewhat unusual in the national context in that it still has selective education with four selective schools in the town. Slough now has six academy schools, one primary and five secondary.

Another factor which differentiates Slough from many other areas is its high ethnic minority population. This is vividly demonstrated by the ethnic origin of school pupils in Slough. The table below

includes the latest information on Slough pupils collected by the 2011 January School Census:

	Ethnic Background	Number
Asian or Asian British	Asian Heritage - Any Other	1,009
	Asian Heritage - Bangladeshi	115
	Asian Heritage - Indian	4,119
	Asian Heritage - Pakistani	5,478
Black or Black British	Black Heritage - African	1,642
	Black Heritage - Any Other	129
	Black Heritage - Caribbean	412
Mixed Heritage	Mixed Heritage - Any Other	731
	Mixed Heritage - White & Asian	525
	Mixed Heritage - White & Black African	189
	Mixed Heritage - White & Black Caribbean	443
Other	Chinese Heritage	69
	Other Heritage	718
	Unclassified Heritage	220
White	White Heritage - Any Other	2,281
	White Heritage - British	5,456
	White Heritage - Gypsy/Roma	129
	White Heritage - Irish	165
	White Heritage - Traveller of Irish Heritage	30
	Total Surveyed	23,860

Also of interest is the home religion of Slough school pupils, with some 35.3% of those surveyed describing themselves as Christian as based on the January 2011 School Census. When Slough SACRE was established in 1998, the proportion describing themselves as Christian was just over half.

Religion	Number	Percentage
Roman Catholic	2,187	10.3%
Other Christian	5,308	25.0%
Total Christian	7,495	35.3%
Hindu	1,535	7.2%
Muslim	7,106	33.4%
No Religion	2,143	10.1%
Other	502	2.4%
Sikh	2,395	11.3%
Unclassified	86	0.4%
Total Surveyed	21,262	

Religious Education

Early in the year the SACRE was pleased with the success of an RE and Art Exhibition organised in St Mary's Church. Children from local schools had been invited to submit artwork on a number of spiritual themes. The response to the project was excellent and several schools had contributed entries.

Due to a large number of services which took place in the church whilst the artwork was on display it was estimated that the exhibition was probably seen by up to 3000 people in total and a number expressed delight at the children's work. A large number of the children who contributed received certificates for their work.

Less positive news in relation to religious education was the closure of the RE Resource Centre located in the Iqra School. Reduction in its use and a consultation with schools revealed the centre was no longer viable and the trustees took the decision to close it. Some of the stock went to resource centres elsewhere in the country and some was moved to St Mary's Church of England Primary School from where it can be borrowed by other schools.

Funds that remained were donated for the development of an RE Trail. This initiative was inspired by a conference held in the previous year for members of the six Berkshire SACREs when they received a presentation from Paul Hopkins and were introduced to a website about RE trails: www.retrails.org.uk

The SACRE recognised that the time for a review of the locally agreed syllabus for RE was close. As a consequence, in partnership with the five other SACREs of the former Berkshire, it distributed a questionnaire to schools within the authority to canvass teachers' views about the existing syllabus and their thoughts on possible amendments and revisions. Few responses were received but all of them were analysed and went forward to inform decisions about the review.

Collective Worship

During 2010/11 SACRE approved one request for a renewal of a determination on collective worship for Baylis Court Girl's Secondary School.

The Senior Advisor of Standards and Achievement visited the school and provided a report to SACRE which provided detail on the current practice at the school which recommended that the determination be extended. A list of those schools granted a determination by Slough SACRE is given below:

School	Date Determination Granted
Montem Primary School	10.02.10
James Elliman School	10.02.10
Baylis Court Girls' Secondary School	13.10.10
Godolphin Infant School	09.06.10
Godolphin Junior School	15.10.08

Links with other bodies

SACRE is affiliated to the National Association of SACREs. The Chair represented the SACRE at two NASACRE conferences during the year: one in March entitled, 'Whose RE is it anyway' when members from all the different groups on SACREs from all over the country came together to discuss the value of SACREs.

The second conference was the AGM in May at which there was a focus on young people's involvement in SACREs through clearly defined projects and youth SACREs.

Budget and professional support

The cost of administering SACRE in 2010/11 was minimal. Administrative support costs were absorbed within the Council's own budgets.

The SACRE has been supported during the year by Dennis Kitchener (Senior Adviser, Standards and Achievement), Peter Quinn (Workforce Development Adviser) and Claire Gray (Clerk to the SACRE)

Appendix 1 – The Legal Context

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Section 11 of the Education Reform Act 1988 (as amended by Section 255 of the Education Act 1993) places a duty on Local Authorities to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) in accordance with requirements laid down in that Section. The constitution of the SACRE is approved by the Education Committee (or equivalent).

An Authority must also establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) under the provisions of Schedule 5 to the Education Act 1944 for the purpose of reviewing the agreed syllabus for religious education every five years. The two bodies are legally separate. The Authority must convene the Conference to produce and recommend an agreed local syllabus for RE.

Sections 255(2) and 254(3) of the Education Act 1993 respectively require authorities to review the membership of group A (Christian denominations and other religions) of their SACRE and the corresponding Committee of their Conference, so that the representation of each denomination or religion shall “so far as is consistent with efficient discharge of the group’s (Committee’s) functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the area.”

Members of SACRE are appointed by the Local Authority.

The Annual Report of the SACRE must be presented to the Local Authority each year.

SACRE’s main function is “to advise the authority upon such matters connected with religious worship in its schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the authority may refer to the Council or as the Council may see fit”.

It can also:-

- Require the LA to review its current agreed syllabus;
- Consider applications made by a headteacher for a determination of exemption from the broadly Christian character of collective worship.

(Education Reform Act 1988 S11(1)(a), S11(7), S12(1).)

The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

The Education Reform Act 1988 requires that:

- Religious Education should be taught to all pupils in full time education except for those withdrawn at the request of their parents (details to be found in Religious Education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010, pages 17 and 27)
- Religious Education in county and voluntary controlled schools should be taught in accordance with an agreed syllabus
- As part of the curriculum, Religious Education should promote the “spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils”
- An agreed syllabus should “reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain” (Education Reform Act, Section 8(3))
- The Education Act 1996 states agreed syllabuses in any community school and any foundation, voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled school without a religious character cannot require RE to be provided by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of a particular religious denomination (Schedule 31, para 4)

Appendix 2 - Constitution

SLOUGH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The SACRE is established in accordance with Section 11 of the Education Reform Act 1988 (as amended by Section 255 of the Education Act 1993) by Slough Borough Council acting as Local Education Authority.

Membership

1. The Members of the SACRE shall be appointed by the Authority so that they shall represent the following groups.

Committee 1 – Christian denominations and other religions (12)

- The Free Churches (1)
- The Black Free Churches (1)
- The Roman Catholic Church (1)
- Hinduism (1)
- Islam (4)
- Judaism (1)
- Sikhism (2)
- Baha'is (1)

Committee 2 – The Church of England (4)

Committee 3 – Associations representing teachers (6)

- National Union of Teachers
- VOICE
- National Association of Head Teachers
- Association of School and College Leaders
- NASUWT
- Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Committee 4 – The Authority (5)

2. Committee 4 shall be subject to the proportionality requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
3. No Member appointed to the Cabinet shall be appointed to the SACRE.
4. The SACRE shall be appointed by the Council.

5. Where a nominated representative fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the SACRE and fails to give their apologies s/he, shall cease to be a member of the SACRE and the nominating body shall be invited to nominate another representative provided that:
 - (a) the Clerk to the SACRE has advised the member in writing of the provision of this clause following the second missed meeting and at least a 10 working days before the third meeting.
 - (b) SACRE does not decide to disapply this rule for reasons of extenuating circumstances.

Terms of Reference

1. In accordance with Section 11 of the Education Reform Act 1988 (as amended by Section 255 of the Education Act 1993) to advise the Council on such matters connected with religious worship in schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the authority may refer to it or as it may see fit. To advise, in particular, on methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers.
2. On application made by a Head Teacher of any Slough school after consultation with the governing body to consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in the case of that school, or in the case of any class or description of pupils at that school. The SACRE shall arrive at its decision and communicate it to the Head Teacher in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 of the Education Reform Act 1988.
3. The representative groups on the SACRE other than that representing the authority may at any time require a review of any agreed syllabus for the time being adopted by the authority.
4. The SACRE shall each year publish a report on its proceedings and those of its representative groups, the report to specify any matters on which the SACRE has given advice to the authority and the reasons for offering that advice.
5. The SACRE shall take any action assigned to it by the authority in relation to the consideration and disposal of any complaint concerning worship or religious education in compliance with Section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Appendix 3 – Membership 2010/11 and Attendance Record

Name	Representing	Possible Attendances	Actual Attendances
Mrs S Elbrow	The Free Churches	3	3
Mr Kevin Walker	Roman Catholic Church	3	0
Mr S S Shah	Islam	2	0
Mr S M Afzal	Islam	2	0
Mr Z H Raja	Islam	2	0
Mr M L Khan	Islam	2	0
Mr N Saraswat	Hinduism	3	0
Mr Vijay Gupta	Hinduism	2	0
Ms J Osborne	Judaism	1	0
Mr J S Chahal	Sikhism	2	0
Dr I Hayati	Baha'is	3	0
Ms J Fageant	Church of England	3	3
Rev. A Bignell	Church of England	3	2
Mrs Christine Isles	Church of England	3	3
Rev A Allen	Church of England	3	2
Ms L Bussley	National Union of Teachers	3	3
Ms M Stacy	National Association of Head Teachers	3	2
Cllr B Bains	Local Authority	3	2
Cllr D MacIsaac	Local Authority	2	1
Cllr M S Mann	Local Authority	3	3
Cllr M Rasib	Local Authority	2	1
Cllr M Basharat	Local Authority	3	3
Cllr S Munawer	Local Authority	1	1

Appendix 4 - Exam Results 2010/11

GCSE Full Course: Religious Studies 2010/11

Centre	NOR	NOE	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Q	U	X	A*-C	A*-G	QCA Av Pts
Baylis Court, Slough	153	49		6	5	14	7	6	5	4		2	[1]	25	47	34.3
Herschel Grammar, Slough	121	121	14	43	47	12	4	1						116	121	48.4
Langley Grammar, Slough	147	146	31	61	38	14	2							144	146	50.3
Slough And Eton C E, Slough	149	92	2	10	24	34	14	7	1					70	92	41.2
Slough Grammar	158	157	18	65	45	23	2	1	1	1		1		151	156	48.1
St Bernard's Catholic Grammar, Slough	121	121	54	43	15	6	2					1		118	120	52.6
St.Joseph's Catholic High, Slough	118	91	1	13	19	31	6	6	7	6		2		64	89	38.1
The Westgate, Slough	143	141	5	20	27	39	22	17	5	6				91	141	39.4
Wexham, Slough	140	36	2	6	13	4	5	1	3	2				25	36	41.2
Slough LA		954	127	267	233	177	64	39	22	19		6	[1]	804	948	45.2

[] denotes actual figures due to a divisor of zero or Grade X entries

< denotes data which is protected due to a small cohort size. Protected values are not included in total.

GCE A Level: Religious Studies 2010/11

Centre	NOE	A*	A	B	C	D	E	N	Q	U	X	A*-A	A*-B	A*-E	QCA Av Pts
Baylis Court, Slough	3		1			1	1					1	1	3	200.0
Langley Grammar, Slough	23		4	9	7	2			1			4	13	22	220.4
Slough Grammar	13	2	4	5	2							6	11	13	253.8
St Bernard's Catholic Grammar, Slough	14		6	5	2	1						6	11	14	244.3
The Westgate, Slough	5			3	1		1						3	5	216.0
Wexham, Slough	6			1	1	3	1						1	6	190.0
Slough LA	64	2	15	23	13	7	3			1		17	40	63	228.3

GCE AS Level: Religious Studies 2010/11

Centre	NOE	A	B	C	D	E	N	Q	U	X	A-B	A-E	QCA Av Pts
Baylis Court, Slough	1		1								1	1	120.0
Langley Grammar, Slough	1				1							1	90.0
Slough Grammar	8	3	3	2							6	8	121.9
St Bernard's Catholic Grammar, Slough	6	4	2								6	6	130.0
The Langley Academy	1					1						1	75.0
The Westgate, Slough	2		1		1						1	2	105.0
Wexham, Slough	5					3			2			3	45.0
Slough LA	24	7	7	2	2	4			2		14	22	103.1

[] denotes actual figures due to a divisor of zero or Grade X entries

< denotes data which is protected due to a small cohort size. Protected values are not included in total.

ST GABRIEL'S PROGRAMME

RE COMMUNITY CONFERENCE 2011

Wokefield Park, Reading

1-2 OCTOBER 2011

PROCEEDINGS

**ST GABRIEL'S PROGRAMME
RE COMMUNITY CONFERENCE 2011**

PROCEEDINGS

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Context: The RE Community Weekend 2011	3
RE: A unique opportunity and challenge: Summary of keynote address	4
Responses and ways forward: Reports from the working groups	8
Conclusions	15
Appendix A: Organisations supporting the RE Community Conference 2011	17

1. Introduction

This Proceedings of the RE Community Conference of 1-2 October 2011 follows on from the earlier initial summary of context, themes and outcomes, which was distributed to all conference participants and all RE Council members in November 2011. Because of the complexity and volume of the responses generated during the conference group sessions, it has been necessary to take time to collate them into a format that can be used by participants and RE organisations.

2. Context: The RE Community Weekend 2011

The RE Community Weekend 2011 was a collaboration between the St Gabriel's Programme and the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. Details on these two organisations can be found in Appendix A. The 2011 event was a departure from the previous pattern of St Gabriel's CPD weekends, and it was planned in order to be relevant to a specific set of circumstances that were affecting RE at the time. The educational scene was changing very rapidly in ways which are negatively affecting RE. The introduction of the EBacc with the consequences for RE of having been left out, and the implications for RE of the review of the National Curriculum, are two examples of these. The community conference aimed to give an opportunity for some 200 participants from the world of RE to come together for a weekend to discuss ways forward for the subject.

It was clearly vital to have, within the conference membership, participants representative of (but not formally representing) the wide range of interests and involvements in RE. So the RE Council's member bodies were invited to nominate one person each. Early invitations were also sent to each of the officers and trustees of the RE Council. Three professional membership associations, the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE), the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) and the Association of University Lecturers in RE (AULRE), along with the National Association of SACREs, were invited to nominate several. To ensure that RE teachers themselves were substantially represented, NATRE was invited to nominate 50, and also invitations were sent to those who had given up earlier weekends to attend the CPD ones. Others such as faith/belief organisations, RE publishers, resource providers and GCSE examiners were also invited.

In practice, a balanced invitation list does not necessarily result in a balanced participant list. Since the conference was not a decision-making body, the organisers imposed no strict requirement about representation. Participants were present either by nomination of their association/community, or as individuals in their own right. A significant number of participants were members of more than one association/community. This flexible approach helped to create a substantial and broadly-based spectrum of the RE community as a whole, with a good range of interest areas including, crucially, over 80 teachers.

The St Gabriel's Programme provided the resource for the event in the form of financial backing, organisation of the bookings and management of mailings. In view of the very specific circumstances threatening RE at the time, it was felt appropriate to ask the RE Council to devise a

conference structure, including a keynote and themed questions in groups. Thus the Chair of the RE Council, John Keast OBE, was asked to draw up a programme and provide a keynote address. John had been elected as Chair of the RE Council, by the various RE member organisations. The content of the conference was designed to enable all views to be heard and discussed. It was decided not to issue the questions in advance, partly on the grounds that it was judged that it would be more effective in generating more spontaneous thought and discussion, and partly because events were still fluid right up to the date of the weekend.

The conference consisted of a keynote from John Keast, followed by work in groups over two days, addressing a set of questions about key aspects of RE policy. A closing plenary, designed to pull the main themes from the groups together, ended with a promise to turn the group reports into one coherent Proceedings document, which could be used by the RE Council, and other organisations supporting RE, as evidence of the thoughts of a substantial and broadly representative body of people from the RE community.

Therefore this Proceedings document reflects the hard work and thinking of all those who participated in the RE Community Conference, and particularly of those who worked in groups to shape answers to some challenging policy questions in a spirit of consensus. The Proceedings is an open document and we warmly invite all organisations supporting RE to take note of its contents and use it, as appropriate, in representing the RE community to the wider world.

3. RE: A unique opportunity and challenge: Summary of keynote address

John Keast OBE is Chair of the RE Council, the body composed of member organisations that support and have an interest in RE in England and Wales. John was an RE teacher, a County adviser, Principal Officer for RE at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and RE consultant to the Department for Children, Schools and Families. For space reasons, this summary gives the key points of John's keynote, and uses his own words in key sections.

After adding his welcome and thanking the St Gabriel's programme for organising the event, John began by emphasising that the critical situation now facing RE presents us with a unique opportunity to develop a new and positive way forward for the subject that is both exciting but challenging.

He outlined the problems for RE, describing them as the most critical for RE for many decades – critical, but not fatal – as follows:

- a. The drive towards academies and free schools intended to create an 'independent' system of education tends to undermine the statutory entitlement on which RE has traditionally depended. Already RE is required to be provided in academies only by virtue of their funding agreements, and not in accordance with any agreed syllabus.
- b. Ofsted no longer routinely inspects compliance by schools with statutory requirements.
- c. The capacity of LAs to review/update agreed syllabuses, support schools in teaching

them, and resource their SACREs is diminishing. Few local authorities now have RE advisers. With notable exceptions, SACREs are becoming increasingly redundant and impotent as schools in their areas become further detached from locally agreed syllabuses.

- d. Targets for RE PGCE places in Initial Teacher Training are being reduced; fewer new teachers are being trained, and there will be fewer qualified RE teachers in the future.
- e. The review of the National Curriculum, intended to reduce its size and influence but set out core essential knowledge, does not include a review of RE.
- f. The English Baccalaureate excludes Religious Studies as a humanities subject and is seriously weakening the position of RE in secondary schools.
- g. There is no longer a national RE adviser for curriculum, assessment and qualifications.
- h. The government appears impervious to attempts to convince them of the (unintended) consequences of their policies on RE and is in danger of presiding over its decline (or even demise) by neglect.

Mindful of the danger that focussing only on the threats to RE might become a self-fulfilling prophecy, he also emphasised some fundamental and positive aspects of RE:

- a. RE offers and provides an essential and unique contribution to the education of children, young people and society at large. Even though not always well articulated or unanimously agreed, this is accepted by government, most educationalists and parents.
- b. The legal requirement to provide RE in all schools and for all pupils not withdrawn by their parents has been reaffirmed by the government many times and in many forms, and is not likely to change.
- c. RE is mostly taught by regular, trained teachers with a professionally-structured curriculum in agreed and publicly-available syllabuses, using sound resources and methods. This is not the case in much of Europe.
- d. The quality and commitment of those who teach RE is at an all-time high, and whilst there is poor practice, RE teachers remain RE's greatest asset and their support its greatest priority.
- e. The place of RE within the public examinations system is many times better now than it was twenty years ago.
- f. The RE community is more identifiable, better organised and more articulate than ever before partly as a result of the RE Action Plan 2007-11 and the work of the RE Council.
- g. There is an overt swell of support for RE among policy makers, politicians, the media and

many others which has never existed before, largely as a result of the E Bacc campaign in 2011.

- h. Many countries in Europe and beyond look to RE in England and Wales as an example of good practice and a source of inspiration.

These strengths, which have helped RE to travel a long way in times of educational change, will also be crucial during this period of unprecedented deregulation, variety, diversity and change. Although the RE 'subject community' is very diverse, it can and must become responsible for itself. This means developing a mature and effective way of working that no longer depends on government or local authorities but on its own professionalism, confidence and resources; it means looking forward, not back, and relying on its own strengths rather than depending on external organisations such as Ofsted, local authorities or QCDA.

Above all, it means that the RE subject community has to work more closely together. While this is not always easy, we should remember that individual RE organisations' interests are actually better served if they work together; and all RE organisations' interests must be subservient to those of children, young people and adults, and of society. *Their* entitlement to good RE and the benefits it brings must be the over-riding concern. Working together means working to an agreed strategy, not suppressing all difference or variety. John emphasised that the biggest risk we face is that of fragmentation. While there are different approaches to RE, we need to harness these in a common endeavour, intent on a common and agreed set of outcomes. This is unity in diversity.

The RE Council, as a representative body for over 50 RE organisations, is crucial in fostering this unity and representing it to government. The RE Council seeks to:

- i. Act as a national forum for all who share matters of common concern in promoting the highest possible standards of RE in all schools, colleges and universities RE
- j. Be a clear national voice for RE – for advocacy, support and improvement of RE
- k. Influence policy and liaise proactively with government and other national and international bodies on RE
- l. Promote a clear, positive image and public understanding of RE
- m. Represent at a *strategic* level the collective interests of its member bodies in relation to RE

On 21st September 2011, the RE Council's Executive Board adopted a five year strategic plan for RE. This is available at <http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/>. The plan has five objectives all of which are designed to restate, renew or reinvigorate RE in England. It will succeed only if all constituencies within the RE community work with and through it. These objectives are:

- i. To promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment in RE
- ii. To influence the development of public policy on and understanding of RE
- iii. To promote a coherent professional development strategy for RE
- iv. To secure adequate and sustainable resources for the REC
- v. To review the structures and operation of the REC.

Each of these objectives will have a committee to take it forward and will be achieved by all of us in the RE Council contributing together.

The first objective will be linked to the National Curriculum review and build on the work previously done by LAs working together in the Agreed Syllabus review collaboration, by the QCDA and by others. The purpose will be the restatement of a convincing rationale for RE, a clear and manageable curriculum relevant to our times, with assessment processes and qualifications to match. A new REC Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications Committee (CAQ) is to be established and oversee a project, a review of RE, to produce the basis for such a curriculum. He hoped to chair this.

The second objective will relate to the external relations of the Council, including government, other education groups such as heads and governors, SACREs, LAs, schools of all kinds, the public and the media. It will help establish the RE community as a publicly known and influential voice for the RE. There already exists a REC PR Committee, chaired by John Gay, which will have the remit to achieve this objective.

The third objective will build on the previous work of the RE CPD Round Table, the RE CPD eHandbook, the new courses being developed by Culham St Gabriel's, RE Today's existing work and many other foundations to establish a more coherent and effective programme of CPD. a new REC Professional Development Committee, under Phil Leivers, will be set up to help achieve this.

The fourth objective is essential to the others for without a sound financial basis the RE Council cannot function as the voice of the whole RE community. A REC Resources Committee will look after this, and spearhead a fund raising strategy.

The fifth objective is equally necessary as, currently, the RE community is not as efficient and effectively structured as it could and should be. Deborah Weston, the REC's Company Secretary has already started work on this, and will head up a Governance Committee.

The committees will include key representatives of the RE community/organisations, which will include some of those present at the community conference. Detailed plans for each objective are now being worked out. John emphasised that input from members of the conferences was welcome and important.

John concluded by emphasising again that, despite the setbacks, the importance of and need for good RE has not diminished, only increased:

The essential encounter between teacher and learner to deal with matters of faith and belief remains fundamental. Good RE has to involve good teachers, and all that we do has to enable them to be even better and raise standards of achievement higher still. Good teachers need good curricula, resources, support, advocacy and reward. The whole RE community must come together through the RE Council to put RE fully in place, in a professional, authoritative, coherent and confident way. There is much to do but much more to look forward to.

Responses and ways forward: Reports from the working groups

The conference then divided into groups to address a list of questions, starting with general questions and later addressing specific aspects of policy in relation to RE, through eight themes. The eight themes were:

1. Strategy for RE: What is the right direction for RE now?
2. Rationale for RE: What is RE for?
3. Curriculum for RE: What should be studied in RE?
4. Assessment of RE: What standards and qualifications does RE need?
5. Professional Development in RE: Who will teach RE and what training do they need?
6. Resources for RE: What resources does RE need, and where will they come from?
7. Public understanding of RE: How can RE be best promoted publicly?
8. Structures for RE: How can the RE community be made most efficient and effective?

Each theme was treated by two separate groups. The groups were asked to identify possible ways forward, and to report on these in summary during the final plenary. The points recorded in this section include only those points supported by more than one person, and were relevant to the theme.

THEME 1: STRATEGY FOR RE

Specific questions were:

- Given the fundamental changes taking place in education, how should RE position itself in relation to the government, local authorities, SACREs, schools and others?

- Given the diversity of philosophies of education and RE, how should RE position itself along spectrums of traditional-radical, conservative-progressive, content-skills, communal-individual, utilitarian-liberal, religious-secular, national-local, confessional-professional, value-laden-value-neutral, academic-populist, learning-about-learning-from, etc, including any other spectra you wish to consider?
- Should RE continue to be called RE, and if not, what should it be called?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- The best advocates are children/young people who enjoy RE.
- Reclaim SMSC, as it is highlighted in the Ofsted framework for inspection.
- Focus on rigour and good practice in teaching: there are many examples that need collating and emphasising.
- The RE world is too complicated and should work together more, identifying where we can win, eg with governors. We should present the government with an aspirational but realistic agenda, and hold them to account on key matters of compliance. The DfE needs to know and understand that there is a consistent set of messages coming from the RE community, so consensus is essential.
- The RE community needs to be a segmented, polycentric, integrated network, or 'spin'. Both local and national elements are important in RE.
- The TES forum is a very important place for promoting RE. LinkedIn is also useful.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- How does the government see RE? If it will not give direction, what should the RE community do?
- How can we replace the networks that advisers used to provide?
- Who 'owns' RE?

THEME 2: RATIONALE FOR RE

Specific questions were:

- The 'importance of RE' statement from the 2004 Framework was slightly adapted for the QCA-led curriculum reviews of 2007-8 and 2009-10. How, if at all, would you amend this statement?
- How would you restate the case for RE being a compulsory subject in the school curriculum

in the first half of the 21c in the UK?

- To what extent is the rationale for RE bound up with the profile of religion(s)?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- The importance statements of 2004, 2008 and 2009 are basically the same statement, and were broadly agreed with. Within the one statement, there are diverse messages: at different times, different messages come to the top of the list of priorities. This reflects the multi-faceted purposes of RE and could be adapted to suit different communities.
- The rationale for RE is difficult to agree in the RE community. It depends on the context of the school (religious or community). Yet it is vital for establishing an agreed pedagogy.
- A shorter, punchier and crisper statement is needed for use with members of the public.
- The increasing interest in philosophy and ethics is a significant indicator of what children and young people want to learn.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- What does it mean to be a religiously educated child, or religiously literate? The RE community has different and competing pedagogical models, and cannot resolve this.
- Who or what is driving the rationale for RE? The needs of children/young people, the needs and interests of religious communities, the RE subject community, or society?
- How do we stay faithful to the founding principles of RE whilst also communicating it effectively to a variety of audiences?

THEME 3: CURRICULUM FOR RE

Specific questions were:

- What, if at all, comprises the core essential knowledge of RE?
- Looking at the range of content from the 2004 Framework, how, if at all, would you amend this statement?
- How would you resolve any tension between depth and breadth in the RE curriculum?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- There was significant agreement that there should be a central focus on 'what does it mean to be human?', with references to responses found in some religions and beliefs. There should be a strong emphasis on religious literacy, eg understanding of symbols and layers of

meaning, capacity to hold conflicting theories and to think ethically.

- A wide range of perspectives should be drawn on, not only the principal religions.
- There should be a strong focus on knowledge, but not to the detriment of experiential or evaluative processes.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- What is the best balance of content, skills, attitudes and values?

THEME 4: ASSESSMENT OF RE

Specific questions were:

- RE has become familiar with two attainment targets (Learning about and learning from) since 1994. To what extent should these be retained as the basis for assessment of pupils' progress and standards in RE?
- If the 8-level scale published in the 2004 Framework were to be reviewed, what would you want to see in its place?
- How fit for purpose are the current suites of Certificate of Achievement, GCSE (Short and Full course), AS and A level qualifications? If they are not fully fit for purpose, how would you want to see them changed?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- It was recognised that this is profoundly related to question 2, on the rationale for RE.
- To start with, there was wide agreement that having two attainment targets was suitable, but later, some participants suggested that, from teachers' points of view, it was a confusing and confused model, particularly in relation to AT2.
- Some felt that the level statements were problematic, even though levels 7 and 8 are very demanding. Many agreed that the levels are not consistently applied.
- More rigorous forms of assessment, from age 5 to 18, particularly of Christianity, and improved primary/secondary transfer arrangements, are needed.
- Some stated that the COA gives point scores, fits pupil capability, can be taught alongside short course and is helpful.
- There was significant agreement that RE is insufficiently demanding in short course GCSE and to a lesser extent in KS3 and primary. GCSE does not prepare well for A level. This is

impacting on Russell Group and government attitudes towards RE.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- How can RE make itself more rigorous?
- Should we continue with two attainment targets, or move to one?
- How can the RE community reform qualifications? Is it possible to generate new qualifications, as the RC community did with NOCN?

THEME 5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN RE

Specific questions were:

- What are the biggest obstacles to improving the continuing professional development of RE teachers, other than the lack of money?
- What are the most viable solutions to the obstacles identified in question 1?
- Given that the government is most unlikely to provide any funding for RE CPD, what are the most likely sources of funding, and on what should it be spent?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- Apart from cost, other factors mentioned as obstacles were: time, energy, lack of priority from head teachers, and a sense that ITE and CPD are often fragmented rather than a continuous, coherent offering. In-school CPD is by definition narrow and of variable quality.
- There was significant agreement that we need to plan for an unknown future – one with less money, fewer advisers, weakened SACREs and limited formal CPD opportunities. Yet teachers' needs remain largely the same: a confident understanding of RE, knowledge of content, examples of good practice underpinned by pedagogical understanding.
- Other factors were urged by some participants: that religions should be understood by teachers as concerning life and action, not only belief; that the teacher is a mediator between a religion/belief and the student; and that faith communities should be involved in delivery, although for some this was seen as problematic.
- There is a particular need for courses and experience for primary teachers and secondary non-specialists.
- Many participants welcomed the idea of CPD models that help to improve provision and share experience throughout their career.
- Some participants mentioned Farmington fellowships, and grants from various RE trusts

including St Gabriel's and Culham, as sources of support.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- How do we address the fall in numbers for PGCE?
- How do we create affordable, accessible CPD? There was a lack of awareness of what is already available, whether generic or RE-specific, and this suggests a need to draw information together into a coherent whole.

THEME 6: RESOURCES FOR RE

Specific questions were:

- Looking at the University of Warwick's 2010 research on Resources in RE, which of the several issues it raised are the most important, and how can they be resolved?
- How can the quality and provision of RE resources be improved?
- Should there be any form of kite marking for RE resources, and if so, who should provide the kite mark?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- Nearly all participants agreed that the best resource is a good teacher, one who is willing to continue learning. Examples of outstanding practice need to be more widely showcased, through actual and virtual networks.
- Many thought that involving the local community, including families and faith ambassadors, would be a good resource.
- Several people were against the kite marking idea, because it would be difficult or impossible to reach agreement on who should do the kite marking.
- A significant number drew attention to the increase in use of online resources or resources linked to a specific awarding body, and felt that standards and variety had to be improved. There is a need for training to tailor generic resources such as whiteboard and smartboard for RE use.
- Pupil-teacher collaborations, artefacts and good examples of cross-curricular links are often a useful resource.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- How to source 'no-strings' funding?

- How to ensure resourcing and support reaches those who need it most, eg non-specialists, TAs?

THEME 7: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF RE

Specific questions were:

- How can the public understanding of RE best be improved?
- How can the recent PR campaign, that focussed largely on the English Baccalaureate, be best built on, and by whom?
- To what extent is the public understanding of RE connected with the public understanding of religion(s)?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- There was nearly universal acceptance that RE will get nowhere unless the public, including parents, employers, the media and government, are onside. There is a need for a brief, forward-facing statement that promotes and explains RE to the public. (see Theme 2)
- There was significant agreement that RE has an image problem by being conflated with the interests of religious groups, and with collective worship.
- Significant numbers of participants advocated a name change and rebranding for RE.
- Many also supported the idea of a PR campaign, with an REC publicity officer, RE events and displays in public spaces, celebrity endorsement and social media activity.
- Outstanding classroom practice in RE is the best possible PR.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- A clear narrative about RE, and about its relationship with central government, is needed in order to have successful PR.
- Some suggested more direct representation of teachers on the REC.

THEME 8: STRUCTURES FOR RE

Specific questions were:

- What improvements can you suggest for making the RE community more united, more efficient and effective in promoting good RE?

- Where in the end does authority lie in RE, ie who is the guarantor of standards and quality?
- There is a Historical Association and a geographical Association; both include high numbers of teachers but also other supporters of the subject. How desirable is it for the RE Council to become an RE Association of that kind, and how should the various constituencies of RE be represented within it?

The following responses and ways forward were identified:

- A significant number recognised the need for a united RE community, but some doubted that this was possible because of the different RE organisations' interests and the lack of a collective vision. For some, the RE community is confusing, with edges between organisations being blurred. Some people need signposting to the right organisation for them.
- Getting alongside other subject communities, and associations of head teachers and governors, was advocated by many.
- Several said there should be a collaborative RE agreed syllabus. (!)
- Several said that the REC, NATRE and RE community generally did a great job on the Ebac campaign.

The following issues were left unresolved:

- What kind of lead the REC can give in this, how it can be funded and whether it could/should absorb other RE organisations.

Conclusions

There were several recurrent themes in the work of the groups and the final plenary:

- A shortage of money, time and opportunities to network is hampering the energy and creativity of many RE teachers.
- There was confusion amongst some RE teachers about the different RE organisations, their relationship to each other, to the REC and to government. There appears to be a considerable gulf between teachers, many of whom are isolated, and national organisations. Teachers sometimes feel they are not 'heard' by national organisations. In turn, initiatives of national organisations are sometimes not 'noticed' by teachers.
- A sense that the old order of RE is changing, with national organisations and documents disappearing, advisers and SACREs under threat, and new schools appearing, produced unease and a real need to agree how the RE community respond to these changes positively and successfully.

- A lack of consensus on the rationale and purpose of RE, and a failure to find a simple, accessible way of explaining RE to the public, media and government, struck many present as the most serious weakness.
- Nevertheless, there was a widespread sense of pride in what RE achieves, in the richness of learning it offers and the quality of relationships between faith/belief communities, young people, teachers and communities that it engenders. There was a strong sense of a continuing need to celebrate these strengths.

The RE community conference closed with two notes:

- There was a very widely shared desire to communicate a message to government that steps should be taken to compensate for the damage done by recent policies, and to work with the RE community to promote good quality RE for all learners in all settings.
- There were expressions of thanks to the RE Council, the St Gabriel's programme and all the participants, who had helped to shape responses to the strategic questions facing RE.

The responses coming from the community conference will be very useful for the RE Council as it plans its way forward through its strategic plan, and takes the next steps in addressing the DfE. They will also be useful for the Culham Educational Foundation and the St Gabriel's Trust, two organisations supporting and promoting RE. Culham and St Gabriel's will be merging in 2012 and will take all these points into consideration when planning the RE teacher weekend 2012, to be held on September 29-30, in Wokefield Park.

Appendix A: Organisations supporting the RE Community Conference 2011

The St Gabriel's Programme <http://www.culham.ac.uk/sg/about.php> is a collaboration between two educational trusts – Culham and St Gabriel's. Both were teacher education colleges which were closed at the end of the 1970s and the resultant trusts focused their work on helping to support and develop religious education in all types of school.

In the 1990s the St Gabriel's Programme held a series of national conferences and seminars in London. Subsequently the focus moved to national professional development weekends for RE teachers, the most recent being held at Wokefield Park in October 2010 for 200 primary and secondary RE teachers. The Programme has also supported conferences run by the National Association of Teachers of RE, the most recent being for 100 teachers in May 2011 for a weekend at a conference centre near York. Other sponsorships have included training weekends for diocesan RE advisers.

In 2012, the St Gabriel's trust will be entering a merger with the Culham Educational Foundation. The result will be a combined endowed trust, to be called Culham St Gabriel's, using its resources for supporting and promoting high quality RE, collective worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for all learners.

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales

<http://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org/> was established in 1973 to represent the collective interests of a wide variety of professional associations and faith communities in deepening and strengthening provision for Religious Education.

It provides a multi-faith forum where over 50 national organisations with an interest in supporting and promoting Religious Education in schools and colleges can share matters of common concern. It is the body which negotiates with Department for Education ministers and officials in relation to RE generally and which promotes the subject nationally. In March 2011 it coordinated the National RE Celebrations which included a promotional event in the House of Commons.

Because it is an umbrella body of member organisations, individuals are not able to be members of it in their own right. However several of its member bodies provide membership for individuals including the National Association of Teachers of RE, the Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants and the Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education.

This page is intentionally left blank