

# SACRE NEWS



Issue 35

## FROM THE CHAIR...



The afterglow of the Olympic and Paralympic successes marked the start of the autumn term 2012. However, during the months of late summer, the

**RE Subject Review** moved

rapidly through its opening stage

and the Phase 1 report was launched in mid-November. The Subject Review, probably the most important development in RE in decades, is being led by the REC. In the absence of any government funding for the Review, the REC has successfully secured funding for the entire project from across its member organisations and from charitable trusts.

The RE Subject Review timetable has so far posed real

challenges for SACREs some of which have had to schedule specific meetings to consider and respond



appropriately to the Phase 1 report as well as to submit evidence for consideration by the Expert Panel during the early stages of its work. The first full consultation began on 7th November 2012 and ended on 7th December 2012. SACREs are encouraged to consider the Review timetable and look out for announcements about the Review on the NASACRE website for notice of future opportunities to be consulted.

## In this Issue

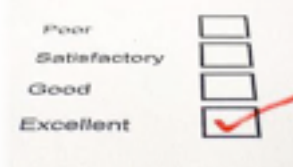
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The autumn saw NASACRE change its office address to that of the relocated REC offices at 14-22 Elder St E1 6BT.

The **London and SE England SACREs annual meeting** took place at the Zoroastrian Centre in early November proved a very successful and well received event with 20 SACREs represented.

I am very grateful to all of you who responded to the **SACRE Survey 2012**.

Around 60 different SACREs sent returns which have enabled us to keep track of changes to levels of LA support for your SACRE and to receive feedback from you on what you need. This feedback is shaping the NASACRE priorities for action for the next three years 16 of which will be posted on the website



early in 2013. I present a more detailed analysis of the survey on page 3.



This year we are aiming to **boost membership** and secure subscriptions from at least 100 SACREs, something we have not achieved for many years now. I would therefore like to encourage all SACREs who have not yet done so to ensure

that they have paid their annual subscriptions. The more SACREs who subscribe and participate in joint endeavours, the stronger we are both financially and politically.

Effective **consultation with SACREs** is very much a live issue for us as we go forward into 2013. NASACRE is trying hard to balance the need to respond quickly to national developments with the need that some SACREs feel that there should be no pronouncements by NASACRE without first consulting SACRE members. This is far from easy. An example of an issue which points to this tension is collective worship. Some SACREs felt that the NASACRE/AREIAC joint publication *Collective Worship Revisited* should perhaps not be placed on our website because although it was a discussion document some (SACREs or others) might not see it as such. Similarly, the later NASACRE joint statement

with AREIAC on collective worship which NASACRE published in October attracted news media attention in the following month. This news 'story,' which first appeared in the TES, contained factual errors and seemed more intent on portraying the government as making a U-turn on Circular 1/94. I say more about this on page 5.

We are looking harder at ways to improve and regularly **update our database**, though this could be a full time task, and we are working with the REC to move toward a shared database. May I encourage you to notify us as soon as possible of any changes to the contact details for your clerks, Chairs or professional RE advisers?

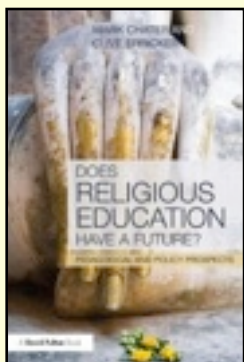
As we enter 2013 we are probably moving into what may prove to be the one of the most challenging periods for RE in many decades. The changes and potential obstacles confronting RE are quite formidable when considered in the cold light of day. Yet, this is also a time of amazing opportunity and possibilities for RE and the manner in which the RE community is galvanising itself to grapple with the practicalities and shape its own future is truly inspiring.

May I wish you all every success for 2013.

*Bruce Gill*

## Date for your diary

**NASACRE AGM - 2013:** A date for your diary - Thursday 23rd May, 2013



Director of Culham St Gabriel's **Dr Mark Chater**, has accepted our invitation to be the afternoon speaker. His recent book, *Does Religious Education have a Future? - Pedagogical and Policy Prospects* written in partnership with Clive Erricker, considers the case for a radical reform of RE, challenging teachers, educators and researchers to think about their approaches to and assumptions about the subject and encouraging them to take a wider perspective.

Further conference details to follow.



## SACRE survey

The NASACRE Survey of SACREs conducted in July 2012 built on two similar surveys of 2010 and 2011. The 2011 SACRE survey received 47 responses from SACREs representing about 30% of the potential membership. By mid-August, the 2012 survey had received 69 responses and by early September this had increased to 71 (46% of the potential membership) However, three of the responses did not identify the SACRE.



The headline findings were that of those SACREs responding, significant proportions reported that they still had specialist advisers and consultants (84%), RE Advisers/ Consultants who were LA officers with knowledge of and access to local schools (72%) and LA clerks (97%). Whilst it was comforting to see such high levels of support the figures provoke the obvious concern that only SACREs receiving such levels of support had the capacity to respond in the first place.

Answers to specific questions on SACRE resourcing suggest a gradual trend towards a polarisation of SACRE budgets between those who have and those who have not; with the number of SACREs in the middle range diminishing each year.

The actual response to the specific questions was as follows:

### How many days of support is your SACRE receiving?

57 answers

1-5	16	(28%)
6-10	8	(14%)
10-15	9	(16%)
16-20	7	(12%)
30	2	(4%)
>30	15	(26%)

### What budget is the LA providing for the SACRE in this financial year (2012/13)?

53 answers

None	4	(8%)
£1,000 or less	4	(8%)
£1,001-£3,000	5	(9%)
£3,001-£5,000	10	(19%)
£5,001-£10,000	11	(21%)
£10,001-£15,000	14	(26%)
£15,001-£20,000	5	(9%)
>£20,000	9	(13%)

### Will the support you are receiving this year continue into 2013-13?

53 answers

Yes we have assumed continuation at this level	23	(43%)
Yes, but likely to be reduced	14	(26%)
No	2	(4%)
Uncertain	14	(26%)

Analysis of the responses raised more questions than answers as to whether or not SACREs were counting staff costs or including grant funded projects within their budget figures. NASACRE is refining the survey questions in readiness for the 2013 survey so that answers will yield better quality information.

Just over a quarter of the SACREs responding were in the process of reviewing their Agreed Syllabus and the response to that question suggests a significant dip in the number of reviews is likely in two years' time.

#### When will you next review your Agreed Syllabus?

57 answers

Currently doing so	15	(26%)
2013 -14	11	(19%)
2014-15	5	(9%)
2016-17	14	(25%)

SACREs were asked what were the greatest concerns of their SACRE for the new academic year (September 2012 to July 2013). From the 52 answers received the stated concerns were:

- Continued **support** for SACREs (27)
- The place of **RE in the curriculum** (23)
- Access to **academies** (16)
- **Monitoring of RE** in all schools (including academies) (11)
- Future **role of SACRE** (12)
- Review of **Agreed Syllabus** (10)
- Supporting schools (**monitoring provision for and standards in RE**) (9)
- Meaningful access for pupils to **non-Christian religious traditions**. (8)
- The **profile of the SACRE in the LA** (8)
- **Professional development** for teacher and RE leaders (3)
- Supporting schools on **collective worship** (4)
- **Teaching of RE** by non-specialists (2)

NASACRE is using these responses to shape and guide its priorities for action during the period 2013-2016.



Bruce Gill

## Circular 1/94: More light than heat?

Government has not withdrawn Circular 1/94 as stated in Irena Barker's article (TES, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012 'Good God, will the role of Jesus be downplayed?').

During 2012 NASACRE and AREIAC pressed government ministers to withdraw Circular 1/94 which contains guidance on collective worship that is now nearly 20 years old. The RE elements of Circular 1/94 have already been superseded by non-statutory guidance issued in 2004 and then in 2010. Government has stubbornly refused to withdraw the Circular. However, during exchanges with officials on the matter it was possible to clarify the status that Circular 1/94 should have with schools. In a letter dated August 2012 Paul McDonald from the DfE stated:

*"The original circular 1/94 contained a statement that 'This guidance does not constitute an authoritative legal interpretation of the provisions of the Education Acts or other enactments and regulations; that is exclusively a matter for the courts'. This was and still is the position of the Department regarding the circular. Schools can use it or not as they see fit."*

This line is consistent with the government attitude to academies and free schools and its policies on localism which seek to encourage and support the principle of taking decisions at the lowest level.

NASACRE and AREIAC consequently issued a joint statement to their members advising them to encourage schools to set aside the Circular when they consider and plan for collective worship. The statement which is reproduced in full in this edition of SACRE News sits alongside the joint NASACRE and AREIAC discussion paper on collective worship entitled *Collective Worship Revisited* that was published in the summer. SACREs are encouraged to consider both documents as they look to provide advice to schools.

In early November the issue caused a late fireworks flurry in the news media when the article in the TES was followed up by articles in the Telegraph and the Guardian the following day. The TES wrongly stated that government has withdrawn the Circular. It also took a sensationalist tone, reflected in some of the other press reports, designed to generate heated debate and exchanges, but that sadly is to be expected of our news media.

Such flaws aside, the TES article did indeed throw the spotlight once again on the question of what constitutes good collective worship in schools.

We published our joint statement in October and AREIAC published it in November. It advises schools to set aside the Circular because too many schools unnecessarily fetter their ability to respond to legislation creatively and imaginatively because of it.

Both AREIAC and NASACRE are encouraging all schools to prepare acts of collective worship that are inspiring, inclusive and respectful and encouraging them to consider *Collective Worship Revisited* to assist them in this.

We are looking forward to discussions on this matter in SACREs generating more light than heat.

**Bruce Gill**





The view of NASACRE and AREIAC is that collective worship can and should be an inclusive experience which, when done well, can make a valuable and highly positive contribution to life in general in all schools. All schools and Academies should be meeting the legal requirements for collective worship. However, we are aware that in attempting to do so many institutions experience difficulties which stem from statements which appear in Circular 1/94. The Circular is thus often a barrier to good collective worship. For this reason NASACRE and AREIAC advise that schools and Academies should not use Circular 1/94 but that their provision for collective worship should be guided by the legal requirements as set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and confirmed in the 1996 Education Act.

This clarification does not give schools new freedoms as stated in the article. Significantly, though, it affirms for schools the freedom which they always had but of which many were unaware.

We are encouraging all schools to prepare acts of collective worship that are inspiring, inclusive and respectful and have produced a discussion document entitled *Collective Worship Revisited* to assist this.



## Bruce Gill



## Jewish SACRE members annual conference 2012

The annual conference for Jewish SACRE members was held at the Board of Deputies of British Jews in October 2012. It was well attended with representatives from SACREs throughout the country.

Our first speaker was **Helen Harrison** who is an independent consultant in religious education. Helen has served Lancashire SACRE and local authority for the past nine years as the County's RE and collective worship Consultant.

Helen gave a very entertaining presentation entitled "Living Judaism" which highlighted the effectiveness of learning through exploration, developing enquiring minds. Helen shared examples in her presentation, from various faith groups to demonstrate how this might be adapted to learn about Judaism. Helen informed us of the work that Lancashire SACRE has done in developing a youth voice to partner the work of their SACRE. This approach has encouraged children to enquire about aspects of RE, sharing what it means to them to be human and how they live their lives. Unfortunately time was against us and Helen had to cut short some of her excellent presentation. I look forward to having the opportunity to hear more on another occasion.

Helen emphasised the role of SACRE Group A members and encouraged everyone present to read the SACRE guide published by NASACRE. It is to be found on the NASACRE website [www.nasacre.org.uk](http://www.nasacre.org.uk).

Our second speaker was **Chana Kanzen**, a teacher in Jewish primary schools for nearly 20 years and now the UK Director of Jewish Interactive. Chana spoke about how some Jewish schools are utilising technology to enhance religious education. She explained how blended learning from a skilled, well prepared teacher was the way forward and how important to teach young people in the language they are growing up with, technology is second nature to young people today. There were many good and exciting ideas demonstrated. Currently the site is designed for use in Jewish schools although there are parts of it that are an open resource. There was general consensus that the website would be very helpful in teaching Judaism in non-Jewish schools. As a result of feedback at the conference Chana and her organisation will be looking into making programmes specifically to teach Judaism to non-Jewish Schools. Since the conference I have accessed the website and can recommend the open resources for use in non-Jewish schools. Anybody interested in learning more can view the site at [www.jewishinteractive.net](http://www.jewishinteractive.net)



Following the speakers there was general discussion about the implications for RE from the English Baccalaureate. Delegates shared news, issues and good practice from their areas with the group. We were informed that the travelling exhibition "The Jewish Way of Life" is now available at no cost. It is a very worthwhile exhibit and very useful for educating large numbers of children about Judaism. Anyone interested in knowing more about the exhibition should contact Sara Younger at the Board of Deputies of British Jews [Sara.younger@bod.org.uk](mailto:Sara.younger@bod.org.uk).

All in all, the conference was a Sunday afternoon well spent.

Elizabeth Sugarman

## Challenging Voices

Many members of SACREs will be well aware of the REsilience project - [www.re-silience.org.uk](http://www.re-silience.org.uk) - which was led by the RE Council, having been awarded a contract by the then Department of Children Schools and Families to work with teachers in secondary schools to increase their competence and confidence in dealing with contentious issues, particularly in relation to religiously-inspired violence.

That project was completed in April 2011, a final report was written which was well received by the DCSF and an evaluation conducted by the former HMI, Dr Barbara Wintersgill.

Although far fewer teachers participated than had been hoped, the REC had great confidence in the project, especially its one-to-one mentoring, following the completion of a carefully constructed self evaluation questionnaire (SEQ) and the development of an individual action plan, supported by Gateway documents to address the issues that were raised. There were considerable strengths and excellent resources here that could be used in other contexts and institutions.

A second pilot was therefore set up under the leadership of Alastair Ross who had been one of the mentor consultants on the DCSF project. This pilot had six strands, including primary schools, whole school issues and further education.

The last of these has recently been completed and an excellent resource published entitled *Challenging Voices*. This was work undertaken by Dr John Wise, the chief executive of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education, in collaboration with Mary Myatt and three FE colleges, in London and Yorkshire. It was supported by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, with the aim of adapting the REsilience materials for use in the varied learning contexts that exist in FE. The SEQ was amended so that it no longer focused on RE but rather on the Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural (SMSC) development of students, thus carrying on the work that had been done in *Emerging Voices*, published the previous year.



***Challenging Voices*** meets the needs of FE tutors in a range of situations, especially tutorials and English and Humanities courses. It provides support for tutors as they deal with contentious issues, whether they are raised by students or planned as part of teaching sessions. There is advice for staff on developing ground rules, how to organise and facilitate discussion groups, how to enable a respectful but challenging learning environment and how to ask questions. This advice is supported with a large number of tried and tested materials from the internet for use as discussion starters in tutorials and vocational courses such as Health and Social Care, Business and Hospitality. There is a particular focus on questions of identity, tradition and belonging, including why such issues should be addressed and how to do so sensitively, all linked to SMSC. A case study from Kingston College completes the booklet, including students' voices.



This publication is to be recommended, and not only for staff and students in Further Education. Anyone working with post-16 students will find this an invaluable resource, including sixth form tutors in schools. *Challenging Voices* is available in hard copy from the REC (see the email address below), and can be downloaded from two websites: [www.fbfe.org.uk](http://www.fbfe.org.uk) and [http://www.recouncil.org.uk/images/stories/REsilience\\_FE\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.recouncil.org.uk/images/stories/REsilience_FE_Booklet.pdf).

The original REsilience project also continues and trained mentors are still available to work with teachers. Please contact the REC if you would like further information: [info@religiouseducationcouncil.org](mailto:info@religiouseducationcouncil.org).

**Joyce Miller**

Chair, REsilience Monitoring Group



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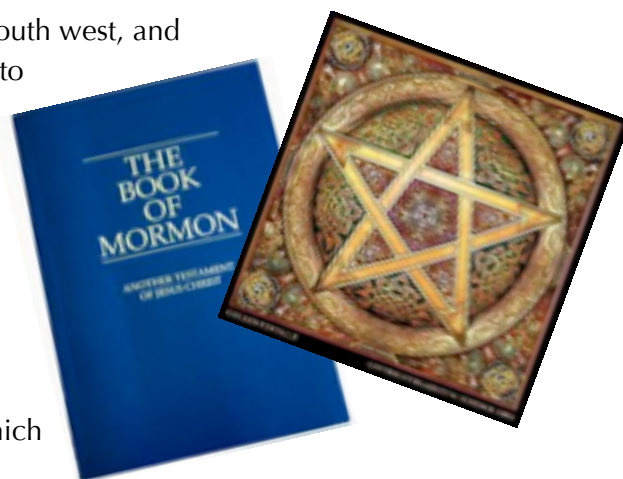
## A can of worms or a timely scan of terms?

A Pagan representative now has a place on a SACRE in the south west, and one London SACRE now includes a Mormon, both assigned to Group A. A well-known inter-faith agency has recently suffered internal upheaval and angst following an application for membership from the Druid Network. These are significant straws in the wind, to be set alongside the ongoing campaign of the British Humanist Association to achieve parity with established religious presences in faith contexts.

These developments challenge the habitual constructs by which many of us have customarily sought to bring order to the amorphous field of religious belief and practice. It is likely that such challenges will recur and multiply in the imminent future. This short article is an attempt to understand how we have come to be in the present predicament, and to examine some of the practical issues which have begun to arise as additional faith groups seek recognition and “a place round the table”.

Half a century ago, schools and the wider community still perceived themselves to exist within a broadly Christian culture and identity. Diversity could be found ethnically (Afro-Caribbeans) and religiously (Judaism), but this did not disturb the prevailing assumptions and perceptions. Only with new inward migrations of significant numbers of people from south Asia (some via Africa), did people become properly aware of an increasing element of religious diversity within the UK.

As evidenced by revisions to RE Syllabuses (GCSE and locally Agreed) and new text books, and by HE Teacher Training courses, something of a consensus about the new core content of RE coalesced quite quickly, but in retrospect this was also a rather confused and anarchic time. Two key events then took place close together. In 1987, the Inter-Faith Network (UK) (IFN) was founded, and in 1988 the

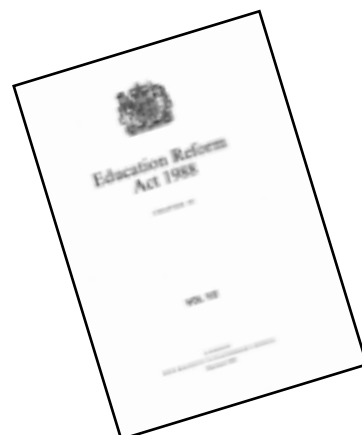


Education Reform Act laid down some parameters for all Agreed Syllabuses, parameters which still constitute the primary legislation in this matter. In future,



RE syllabuses had to give a major emphasis to Christianity, while also taking account of five other “principal religions”. These five were first identified as such in the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE of 2004.

In retrospect, this was a rather confused and anarchic time. Two key events then took place close together. In 1987, the Inter Faith Network (UK) (IFN) was founded, and in 1988 the Education Reform Act laid down some parameters for all Agreed Syllabuses, parameters which still constitute the primary legislation in this matter.



These five principal religions - Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, seem to have been chosen for their sizeable presence in the UK and/or for their world significance. The same five and Christianity were also identified as major religions in the constitution of the IFN, with three further “minority” religions also recognised: Jainism, Zoroastrianism (Parsees), and Baha’i. Some sort of order was established, therefore, and for quite a few years this became the accepted status quo.

It is interesting to note that an element of openness (fuzzy edges?) continued to obtain at the local level. While local inter-faith groups had to subscribe to a set of principles to become members of IFN, these did not set any limits or criteria about which groups could be admitted to the local body. In a similar way, SACREs and Agreed Syllabuses could go beyond the six principal religions and take note of other significant religious presences in their area, for membership and curricular RE respectively.

Recently, the viability of this equilibrium has been disturbed. Groups which once might have been regarded as peripheral or insignificant or part of a larger bloc have emerged seeking representation in their own right. Several factors may be at work here, not least the waning of the previously normative and inhibitory influence of the Christian tradition. In addition, these newer groups have been growing in self-awareness, self-confidence and public relation skills, as they seek to engage in the public arena.

It is at the national level that the impact of these developments is most problematic, since local bodies would seem to have sufficient flexibility for the time being to be able to adjust to additional religious presences. In contrast, national bodies have less flexibility and are more high-profile and prestigious.

Nationally, it matters who is allowed to be round the table, and who is not, whether group X is to be regarded as part of group Y or not, whether group F is prepared to recognise and sit with group J.

We are perhaps at the start of a period of inter-group jockeying and politicking which is likely to be messy and fraught, as new structures and ways of working together are thrashed out and new patterns of thought evolve from the old. We can already discern some of the issues that will need to be addressed, and some of the pitfalls that may be encountered on the way. The following is just an initial overview.

- Problems of definition and boundaries, e.g. who or what might be included within the term "Christianity". (But who has the authority to say so, and on what grounds?) Even the umbrella term "religion" is not self-defining, e.g. the hypothetical case of a quasi-religious and hitherto secretive cult stepping up its public profile.
- Problems of religious snobbery, e.g. religion/group A is held to be more deserving of recognition and respect than religion/group B. (Again, who has authority to say this, and on what grounds?)
- Problems of incompatibility, e.g. group S will not sit down with group T because this would compromise group S's intrinsic nature and stance.
- Problems of proliferation: how many different presences can a structure cope with, or an Agreed Syllabus include? There comes a point when sheer numbers would make dialogue and action nearly impossible. Already RE syllabuses must select and judge what to require.
- Problems of process: how best to negotiate the path ahead, while both building new bridges and also keeping faith with existing stakeholder groups.
- Problems of proportion, or, does size matter, and if so, how should this be managed? Faith groups clearly differ in membership numbers and in local strength, but how should this be reflected in national and local bodies?

Experience has already shown that a legalistic approach is unlikely to achieve a constructive outcome. It is also unlikely that any established stakeholder religious group could succeed in stemming the incoming tide, though one can envisage the possibility of obstructive manoeuvres and delaying tactics, and of a defensive stand on the part of a national group having repercussions on its representatives' flexibility within a local body. Qualities of patience, goodwill, mutual respect, negotiating skills, and - dare I say it - humility will be needed even more in inter-faith contexts than up to the present. Hopefully, these qualities will already have been affirmed, valued and nourished in what has been achieved so far.

Watch this space!

**Michael Metcalf**



## Points to ponder: "Matters Arising" from the 2012 AGM

Questions often come up from delegates at NASACRE AGMs regarding the membership of the NASACRE Executive Committee, and we felt that it would be helpful to remind members of the overarching purpose of NASACRE.

NASACRE is not a 'National SACRE'. NASACRE's members are the SACREs themselves, rather than the individuals who make up those SACREs. Unlike SACRE, it is not a body which is required to represent various interest groups such as the Church of England, 'other' faiths, councillors and teachers. Rather, membership of the Executive relies simply on the election of those who have been nominated by their own SACRE to represent SACREs. Each nominee is invited to contribute a short biography naming their belief if they so choose, and this is circulated prior to the election, so it may appear that members can be elected for their faith. However, Executive members do not represent their own faiths; they serve to represent religious education and SACREs in general. The ability and commitment to do this come before any representation of particular groups, be they religious, ethnic or professional.

Having said this, it is of course desirable to have a spread of viewpoints and experiences represented on the Executive. The Mission Statement clearly states that, "NASACRE seeks to promote inter-faith understanding and sensitivity" and the Executive Committee holds the mandate to co-opt a small number of members to compliment membership at any point. With four Honorary Officers, up to eight elected members and four co-opted members, a membership of sixteen should ideally give a good spread. It is important to remember, though, that regardless of individual affiliation, members are there to serve the national interests of SACREs.

Here is NASACRE's most recent protocol statement:

NASACRE exists to strengthen local SACREs and to support them in carrying out all their responsibilities

NASACRE stands for the value of RE within the whole school curriculum by supporting RE, which is determined locally

NASACRE considers that the work of SACREs and the Agreed Syllabus Conferences should involve genuine consultation at the local level with faith communities and teachers

NASACRE seeks to maintain and develop lines of communication with the DfE and other relevant bodies

NASACRE seeks to promote inter-faith understanding and sensitivity

NASACRE seeks to strengthen RE by promoting the key role of well-qualified teachers and advisers in all areas and facets of the subject

NASACRE seeks to promote professional development in RE through initial teacher training and in-service training

NASACRE campaigns for adequate levels of resourcing to achieve these aims

NASACRE intends to play a key role in any future debates about the place of RE and collective worship in school.

NASACRE seeks to foster creative curricular initiatives, and the active involvement of children and young people in planning their RE and Collective Worship and as advocates for these areas of school life.

**Debbie Tibbey**





## Excellent RE

The 6th Annual meeting of the London and SE SACREs was held on November 6th 2012 at the Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow. The venue proved very successful and delegates were made welcome. They were shown around the centre and given an informative talk about the beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism, by Malcolm Deboo, President of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, who also shared some very interesting resources with delegates.

At the start of the day, delegates worked in small discussion groups to share successes, challenges and issues. These were then fed back to Bruce Gill and Denise Chaplin to be fed into the day as questions if appropriate or to take back to the NASACRE executive to inform their work and the roll - out of a national initiative to encourage regional groups to meet in other parts to the country.

Among the issues raised, delegates were most concerned about issues of some schools' non-compliance in providing RE, the rise of the Academies and free schools and the impact that current educational changes to schools and education are having on the state of RE in general.

John Keast, Chair of the RE Council was the morning's keynote speaker. He explained the make up and role of the RE Council (REC) and then presented the conference with some key facts about the state of RE at present. These led to John's simple first conclusion that all RE's national support structures are being dismantled, rendering RE totally a 'local matter'.

SACREs will recognise the issues that are raised for the local RE community:

- the loss of the RE subject paragraphs in OFSTED reports, so less information getting through to SACREs
- the loss of many RE adviser posts nationally
- diminishing or no budget for local SACREs
- disappearance / reduction of local professional development provision
- most secondary schools are now outside the remit of the LA and SACRE.

John suggested that there is also an increasing collapse of local support and structures for RE alongside a wholesale change in the way the government wants RE to be perceived. The intention, it seems, he suggested, is to leave it up to local schools to determine their own response to the requirement (whatever that is) to teach RE. Whilst the government still continue to assert that RE is statutory, clearly this is not the whole picture. John asked what might be the role of the faith communities in this situation?

The likely key consequences John said, were:

- fragmentation of the RE curriculum
- fewer trained RE teachers
- reduction in provision and quality of RE teaching





Is the end of RE as we know it in sight? John rallied the troops with his assertion that the REC will continue to propose that good RE is important to the development of society. He believes that the RE council, local SACREs and other key stakeholders need to take responsibility for the subject.

John explained that the work of the REC is driven by its strategic plan which has 5 key areas of work, each one driven by a committee or working group. These are:

- Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications
- Professional Development
- Public Relations
- Resources
- Governance

Several questions were put to John Keast from the floor and lively debate ensued.

In the afternoon the Conference received a stimulating presentation by Mary Myatt on the Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM).

Mary explained that the aim of this project is to recognise outstanding teaching and learning in religious education. It is an accreditation system which seeks to recognise good practice in RE, and designed to be a mechanism for whole school improvement beyond RE as its principle focus is to enhance pedagogy

The REQM is currently available to all schools, including Academies and faith based schools. Additional information can be found on their website [www.reqm.org](http://www.reqm.org). The purpose of the REQM is to provide a framework that will encourage schools to increase their range and quality of planning, teaching and learning in Religious Education, and, by improving the standard of pedagogy in RE, aim to have an impact on whole school improvement.

The REQM assesses 5 criteria:

- Learners and learning
- Teachers and teaching
- Curriculum
- Subject leadership
- Continuing professional development.



The delegates engaged in interesting activities and asked some probing questions.

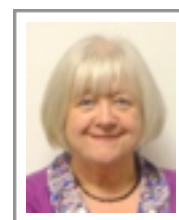
The final speaker of the day was Bruce Gill, Chair of NASACRE.

Bruce used post-its from the first session to give those present a flavour of the successes and concerns. He then circulated an information sheet based on the outcomes of the evaluations from the NASACRE AGM and the responses of SACREs to a survey undertaken by NASACRE in the summer term 2012. (Appendix 2)

Bruce emphasised that NASACRE tries to respond to national initiatives representing the interests of SACREs. This is an enormous task and regional conferences provide an opportunity for NASACRE to be in touch with the concerns and views of SACREs. NASACRE Executive members are all volunteers.

Bruce shared with colleagues a range of work and activities that NASACRE has engaged in since the AGM. He explained that since March of this year NASACRE and the Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants (AREIAC) have jointly been in contact with the Department for Education regarding the status of Circular 1/94 with respect to what this Circular says about collective worship.

At the end of the conference, delegates were promised a conference report and access to power point presentations from the speakers. These are now published on the NASACRE website. There was plenty for delegates to take back to their SACREs and NASACRE was given a useful perspective from the individual SACREs of the issues that they face.



**Denise Chaplin**

## Westhill project report

Wokingham SACRE received an award to consider the interface between RE and Citizenship. It was decided to produce a DVD of interviews with people of faith talking about how they came to their faith and how it impacts on their daily lives in community with others. The Wokingham RE syllabus requires the exploration of at least Christianity, Buddhism and Islam at KS3, so the SACRE sought members of these faiths to interview. A Hindu representative on the SACRE was also willing/keen to join in. It was possible to arrange, and considered to be valuable, that the people selected did not obviously look as though they were members of particular faith groups. They were not nominated by leaders of their communities but chosen because they came to their faiths in a variety of ways and were willing to share the everyday realities of being a citizen of faith. Some had grown up in their faith communities and others had converted from one religion to another – in most such cases having studied their new faith. Each participant can only be understood to have shared their own experiences of living their faith. Other members of the same faiths may say different things and have had quite different experiences.



Each explained in an individual interview how they came to their faith, how this influenced their response to being a citizen of their local area and also being a citizen of the world.

In addition they all met for a filmed discussion on the challenges of their faiths in the communities in which they lived.

The interviews were transcribed and key themes identified. **Katherine Wedell** was commissioned to develop lesson plans based on the resulting resource. She selected three key themes as the basis for well-planned stand-alone lessons: Living a Faith, Commitment, Compassion.

The project is available as a DVD of the interviews and a CD of Katherine's lesson resources priced £10 from [jefconsultancy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jefconsultancy@hotmail.co.uk)



**Jo Fageant**

## REC sponsored walk

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the REC, raise its profile and generate funds to support RE in schools at this critical juncture, the REC is organising a series of sponsored walks which will be held in cities, towns and villages across England and Wales during May 2013. Each walk will take in a number of places of religious significance and could nurture contacts which would be of value from an RE perspective.

The aim is to have 20 different walks taking place across the country, each with fifty participants and with each participant raising at least £100 in sponsorship; in general the walkers would usually be adult 'friends of RE' rather than school students. The target is to raise £100,000. Funds raised will be split equally between the REC and locally chosen charities. Since 2010, the REC receives no government funding to make possible its work of supporting RE in schools and does not wish to engage in revenue raising activities which would put it in direct competition with some of its member bodies.

The REC is looking for help and support from individuals and groups from within its member bodies, of which NASACRE is one. Could your SACRE lead a local organising team? This would involve getting together a group of around half a dozen people to plan a route, persuade people to sign up as walkers, liaise with places to be visited on the route and generate publicity. Could some of your SACRE members take this on? SACREs are well placed to play a valuable role here as they have the local knowledge and contacts to be able to organise a walk effectively. The REC will provide a local organiser pack to help you get started.

The REC needs you! Please contact [sarah@religiouseducationcouncil.org](mailto:sarah@religiouseducationcouncil.org) if you can offer your help for this special 40th anniversary event. We will be very grateful for your contribution whatever form it takes – the first need is for local organising teams but walkers and sponsors will also play an important part.

**Sarah Smalley**, Executive Officer, RE Council of England and Wales



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## BACKPAGE ... SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ...

Dates are taken from the Shap Calendar for World Religions to order a calendar or wallchart  
[www.shap.org](http://www.shap.org)

### January

1st	Christian	Circumcision / Naming of Jesus
1st	Japanese	Ganjitsu (New Year)
5th	Sikh	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh
6th	Christian	Epiphany
6th	Christian	Theophany / Baptism of Christ
7th	Orthodox	Christmas Day
7th	Rastafarian	Ethiopian Christmas Day
14th	Hindu	Lohri / Makar Sankranti
15th		World Religions Day

16th	Buddhist	Shinran Memorial Day
18th-25th		Week of Prayer for Unity
24th	Sunni	Birthday of the Prophet Muhammed
25th	Buddhist	Honen Memorial Day
26th	Jewish	Tu B'Shevat
29th	Shi'a	Birthday of the Prophet Muhammed

### February

1st	Pagan	Imbolc / Candlemas
2nd	Christian	Presentation of Christ in the Temple

## 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



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Please also check your details and if necessary update the membership section and add to the exemplar documentation. Contact us at [web@nasacre.org.uk](mailto:web@nasacre.org.uk)

SACRE News: the newsletter of the National Association of SACREs, published termly. The opinions expressed in articles are those of their authors and not necessarily of the NASACRE Executive. For details see the website. Copies of this e-newsletter may be distributed to SACRE members but content may not be altered or adapted unless specifically stated.

This Spring issue is edited by Sharon **Artley** and Paul **Hopkins**. Newsletter design by MMI web - [www.mmiweb.org.uk](http://www.mmiweb.org.uk)

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