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National Association of
Standing Advisory Councils
on Religious Education

SACRE BRIEFING

Issue: 28

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Welcome and Update from the Chair

Welcome to this edition of the Briefing. I hope you will agree with me that the contents show just how hard the Association is working for its members during this unprecedented and challenging time for us all. We continue to work in partnership with other RE subject associations, the Department for Education and the RE Council of England and Wales, and the various projects reported here by the executive committee members are full of activity that have already had an impact, for example our Freedom of Information request.

Other work promises to help SACREs, their members and the schools they serve to carry out their statutory functions, and their important role in promoting excellent Religious Education - or Religion and Worldviews as it is already being called in some settings - and to support schools in their provision of collective worship. I just want to thank the team, including Marie our administrator, for their commitment to NASACRE and to your SACREs.

And thanks also to all the teachers working in our schools today - whatever subjects they are teaching - as they educate children and young people for life as they are living it now, as well as for the future. Every day that passes shows just how resilient, adaptable and professional they all are - and more importantly to me at least, how the human kindness we all need has been shared across home schooling, and learning in schools and colleges.

This reflection on shared achievement is not to ignore or diminish the difficulties and hardships that we have faced together, and often alone - they too have formed our shared values, and our differences. In the recent edition of the British Journal of Religious Education (Vol 42 numbers 3-4, pages 249-242), Professor Julian Stern's editorial '*Alone, together*' emphasised again the ways in which 'hospitable' RE can 'help children and young people meet each other, and meet others from the long-distant past and from long-distant countries'. He goes on to point out that RE can help us (whoever we are) to meet ourselves - and that is these meetings, of all kinds, that can help us to be 'alone, together, just that bit better'. This edition of BJRE (pages 263-274) also contained an important article by our executive assistant and former Chair, Paul Smalley, covering an analysis of local religious education and the policies that have supported, and challenged its development. One important point emerging from the data in this article is that 'SACREs all have a desire to do

more in the future', given the right set of supporting resources and circumstances, including a wish to continue in the promotion of dialogue between schools and faith communities.

A quick review of publications, email, online meetings and phone conversations since the last Briefing shows us just how active SACREs and their individual members and advisers have been during this last year. Syllabuses have been agreed and launched, competitions entered, events attended, budgets set, resources created and queries fielded. Colleagues (and I include myself here) who didn't list online activity as one of their key skills or priorities have suddenly become confident with 'meeting platforms', if not internet influencers.....

There's more to come - our Annual General Meeting and conference approach, and we need you all to participate in the event and in the elections. I am looking forward to this AGM, and to prior events involving Chairs of SACRE (details to follow) as discussed at our EGM last year.

With very best wishes to you all,

Linda

Chair

National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for RE (NASACRE)

NASACRE Annual AGM and Conference 2021

Our next AGM and Conference will be held on **Monday 24 May 2021** virtually through Zoom. Our programme for the day is now on our **website**, and will be sent to all clerks and SACRE Chairs at the same time.

The 2022 AGM and Conference will be held at the Macdonald Burlington Hotel, Birmingham on Monday 23 May 2022. You may like to put this in your diaries and we will give more detail on the 2022 programme in the autumn.

Our theme for our 2021 conference is ***Authority in RE***. The conference will run from 09:15-16:00 (with several little breaks!) on Zoom.

We are excited to share that **Dr Richard Kueh** and **Professor Denise Cush** will be giving our keynote addresses. Delegates will also have the opportunity to attend

two workshops.

Richard Kueh is Ofsted's subject lead for religious education. A qualified teacher, he holds Masters degrees in Theology and Religious Studies, a Doctorate in Philosophy and a PGCE. Before joining Ofsted, Richard taught in maintained schools, independent schools and universities. He has senior experience as director of a regional school improvement partnership, director of teacher training and development for a multi-academy trust, deputy headteacher of a secondary school and associate headteacher of a primary school. Richard's areas of expertise include curriculum, assessment, teacher development, inclusion and initial teacher education.

Denise Cush (BA Oxford, MA Lancaster, PhD Warwick) is currently Professor of Religion and Education at Bath Spa University. She has taught Religious Studies in a sixth form college, trained both primary and secondary teachers in Religious Education, and taught Study of Religions at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Until recently she was Head of the Department of Study of Religions (now Religions, Philosophy and Ethics) at Bath Spa. She is deputy editor of the British Journal of Religious Education, a major international journal. In addition to RE, her teaching and research interests include Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and alternative spiritualities such as Paganism.

Conference charges

We're going to make a charge for our conference this year, even though it's virtual, as we need to cover our speakers and workshop leaders, as well as extra administrators to help us run such a large meeting.

Going virtual means we can open up our conference to more delegates, as well as radically cutting the usual cost of £110 for attendance. We are limiting places at the conference to a maximum of 4 delegates from any SACRE. **Booking will close on Friday 14 May 2021 at 5pm.**

Subscribing SACRE:

- 1 delegate £30
- 2 delegates £40
- Up to 4 delegates £60

Non-subscribing SACRE:

- £60 per person up to 4 delegates

To see more details about the day's programme, please click [here](#). Once you have booked your place, our administrator will send details of how to book your workshops.

Executive elections

SACREs in paid-up membership are invited to nominate candidates for roles on the NASACRE Executive. We have vacancies for **3 Exec members** and the **Vice-Chair**. These are active roles requiring a commitment of time and energy. Executive members are primarily in role to support the work of NASACRE and SACREs, not to represent a specific SACRE or faith group. For the Exec vacancies, we require people who have skills to support communications, conference organisation and NASACRE's development plan.

The Vice-Chair is a key role, leading after 2 years to the NASACRE Chair. Having not appointed in 2020, it is essential that we elect somebody this year or we may not have a Chair in future! Please think carefully whether there is someone you might nominate from your SACRE.

Nomination forms and further details are [here](#). Nominations must be submitted by **5pm on Friday 14 May** secretary@nasacre.org.uk

Westhill Awards 2021-22

Over the last fifteen years, the Westhill/NASACRE Awards have successfully given SACREs opportunities to enhance their capacity to generate high quality experiences in RE (or collective worship) for their schools.

NASACRE has again encouraged and invited individual SACREs (or SACREs in partnership) to apply for a Westhill/NASACRE Award for 2021-22. Awards of up to £4,000 may be applied for via the [application form](#) on our website.

Projects should offer school pupils the opportunity to engage in compelling learning experiences in RE (or collective worship), within the broad theme of "education into diversity".

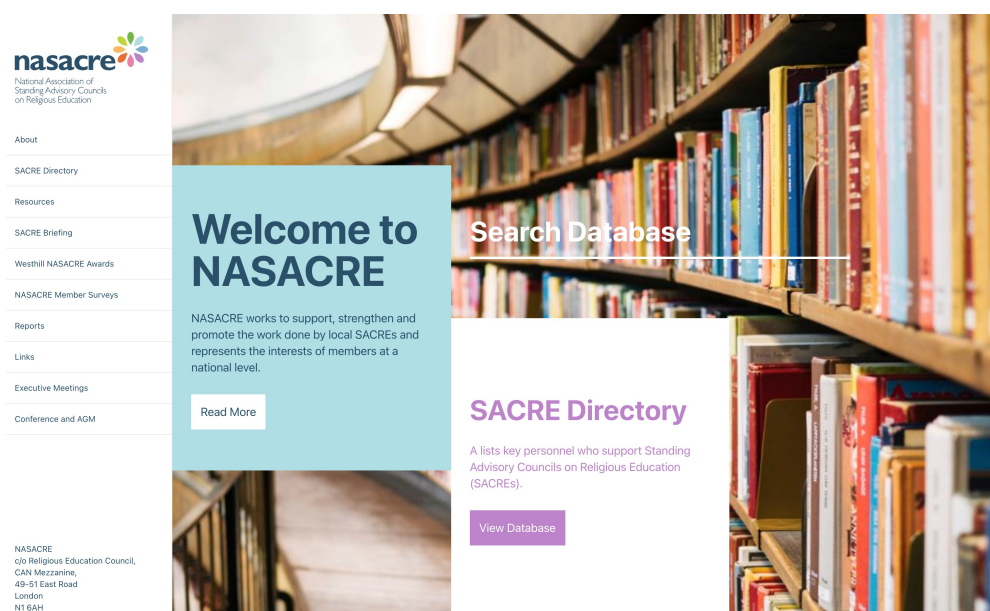
Any SACRE wishing to submit an application is strongly advised to look at the **revised** briefing notes which accompany the online application form.

For queries, advice or further information, please contact [Michael Metcalf](#), the convenor of the Awards Panel.

Closing date: 31 March 2021

Website

We are currently upgrading our NASACRE website. New features will include an opportunity for each SACRE to share links to their locally agreed syllabus and associated materials, as well as other documents and/or guidance the association has produced.



Holding SACRE meetings or Agreed Syllabus Conferences online

The DfE confirms that SACREs and ASCs wishing to hold their meetings online are legally within their rights to do so. SACREs function under the following advice:

“In April 2020, the Local Government Secretary confirmed that local authorities can hold public meetings remotely by video or telephone and removed the requirement for physical attendance at meetings. You can find the announcement on this [here](#) or on the Local Government Association website [here](#).”

Collective Worship Project

A document on Collective Worship is being produced by NASACRE with another RE professional organisation (**AREIAC**) which it is hoped will be of help to NASACRE and AREIAC members and perhaps also inform and help others who may be interested in CW.

After initial discussion, three basic principles have been agreed: CW should be educational, inclusive and that flexibility in this area is desirable to accommodate the needs of different schools. It is thought that if possible, the document should contain some examples which reflect these three ideas. Initially the plan is to review past and existing literature about CW with the intention that this may well identify good practice.

In order for the project to build on that existing good practice around the country, SACREs are invited to send links to their own current materials on CW to NASACRE to: lesley.prior@london.anglican.org

SACRE Annual Reports and Self Review process

NASACRE is working with the DfE to draw up a new template for SACRE Annual Reports. The purpose of this is to make it easier to carry out an annual analysis of these reports for two main reasons:

- to identify and share exemplars of good practice more readily
- to identify where SACREs may be struggling to fulfil their legal obligations and the reasons for this, so that these might be addressed more effectively.

You will have opportunity to find out more at the AGM.

FOI Project

In November 2020 NASACRE sent out a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to all LAs in England about how they finance their SACRE – at present we are analysing this data. We have had responses from 135 out of 154 LAs, with 19 not responding, many citing COVID reasons.

For your own analysis and information, we suggest that all SACRE Chairs ask their

LA's FOI team for a copy of their response to the FOI request. Each LA has an FOI team, paid for centrally by government; we think that some FOI teams haven't known exactly who to ask to collate the relevant figures.

The NASACRE Exec has talked with the DfE about what we have learnt from our FOI. We will update you with the findings once we have done a full analysis.

Details about when we will release our report, together with an online meeting for SACRE Chairs about the findings will be coming soon!

SACRE Membership

Some members of the NASACRE Executive are currently working on a small-scale project focusing on membership of SACREs as part of the Local Area Networks (LAN) project. This will result in the production of some NASACRE guidance materials for SACREs and will enable them to offer more effective advice to their LAs about how membership might be determined and managed, which groups should be represented and how current legal obligations might be fulfilled. It is the LA, **not** the SACRE which determines membership of SACRE:

Each SACRE must have four groups or 'committees', no more and no less.

The Education Act 1996 Section 390 (4) states:

The representative groups required by this subsection are-

- (a) a group of persons to represent such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
- (b) except in the case of an area in Wales, a group of persons to represent the Church of England;
- (c) a group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area; and
- (d) a group of persons to represent the authority.

Members of SACRE represent particular 'groups' within the local authority. Therefore the local authority will need to approach these groups to ask for a representative.

Members of SACRE act as channels through which information passes between their nominating groups and SACRE.

In order to identify nominating groups, local authorities will periodically need to do some research to ensure that these are appropriate. It is important to note that members are not simply interested individuals but people who can act as representatives and be responsible to their nominating group.

Group D is usually made up of elected members, as they represent the electorate as a whole on SACRE. Some authorities also appoint officers to this group and some representatives of governing bodies. Where they do, it is important that the local authority examines any conflict of interest. It would be difficult if the officer voted for something that the local authority would not carry through.

It is not the role of SACRE to find members, but SACRE can make recommendations if members feel that the local authority is overlooking an important group that should be represented.

Many SACREs are awaiting the forthcoming 2021 National Census, the results of which are likely to be published a year or so later; this will include information about the demographics relating to religion and belief in their area. Some SACREs may wish to consider this data before making recommendations to their LAs about membership of Group A.

Worldview 'journeys'

Kathryn Wright, CEO of Culham St Gabriel's Trust, has a message for SACREs:

Sharing our worldview journeys: An opportunity for SACRE members

Some of you will be aware that there are ongoing conversations about what we mean by a worldview, and in particular what we mean by a personal worldview. These conversations are not new, but they are perhaps more pertinent at the moment as discussions take place in the wider RE community about a possible shift from a world religions approach to a religion and worldviews approach within the classroom. We might ask questions like 'What is my worldview?' or 'How does my worldview impact on how I understand new knowledge?'

I have heard many people offer helpful explanations of the term 'worldview' recently. These definitions include 'how I inhabit the world', 'how I make sense of my experience in the world', 'a way of being in the world'. It is a complex term, but an

important one for our subject to grapple with. I remember someone saying to me that a text (or anything you read/explore for that matter) is inert until you bring yourself to it; yet what I bring will be different to what you bring. We each bring our own worldview to whatever it is we are learning.

In a recent **Theos report**, Trevor Cooling, Bob Bowie and Farid Panjwani openly share their own worldview journeys through autobiographical stories (p.89- 107) They trace how their own worldviews have developed over time and identify religious influences and the interaction with their academic work. They demonstrate the complex interaction of factors that contribute to personal worldviews.

At Culham St Gabriel's, we would like to develop some resources for REONLINE (www.reonline.org.uk) which illustrate different worldview journeys based on this autobiographical idea. We aim to show how worldviews can be complex, and that within an organised worldview such as Christianity, there are multiple personal worldviews. We hope that these will be used by teachers to better understand different worldview traditions, and perhaps be used by pupils in the classroom too. We believe, and hope, that SACRE members across the country will be able to help us in this venture.

So, what are we looking for? We are looking for short 'blog style' 500–800-word pieces briefly describing your worldview journey. Perhaps outlining the worldview you inhabited as you grew up; how this has changed, developed or stayed the same. Perhaps outlining varying influences on your worldview through for example education, life experiences, reading, people and places.

At Culham St Gabriel's we offer a supportive editorial process and are happy to chat with anyone who would like to consider helping us. Please **email me** if you are interested.

LAN Project

Four SACREs have now embarked on their research project around the CoRE recommendations on Local Area Networks (LANs).

Bath and North East Somerset SACRE is researching how their agreed syllabus review would need to change, to take account of CoRE's national entitlement statement.

Richmond SACRE is researching how to widen SACRE/ LAN's membership, thinking about the principles and structure that need to be in place for community

cohesion/an effective LAN to work well.

Hampshire SACRE is researching and writing about the role of democratic voice in a LAN/SACRE – what could be lost, what is important to keep.

Barking and Dagenham SACRE is researching the impact of RE CPD in an LA. B&D SACRE applied for a NASACRE Westhill award to finance this CPD provision.

Unfortunately, four SACREs dropped out of the project last term between September and November. In each case this was due to a lack of capacity to take on the research without being given finances to do the work. However, from the remaining four SACREs, the programme captures what they intended to look at - and what prevented them from going further.

Work continues on the project this term, with the action research results reported to Claire Clinton by the end of March 2021. Dr Lorraine Foreman-Pack and Claire will then begin to formulate findings and write their report, which it is hoped will be published in September 2021.

RE Leadership Programme



Open for applications until **31 March** with start dates for the next academic year (September 2021), the programme provides a year of mentoring to help teachers move from leading RE in their schools to having a wider vision and potential to develop a wider leadership role in RE. This could help to support your work as a SACRE, building up the voices of your teacher panel.

For more details to pass onto interested teachers:

<https://www.reonline.org.uk/leading-re/leadership/leadership-programme/>

INSIGHT UK report on the state of Hinduism in Religious Education (RE) in UK schools

INSIGHT UK is an organisation that aims to address the concerns of the British Hindu and British Indian communities. In 2020, INSIGHT UK conducted a project with a team comprised of highly experienced members of the Hindu community, amongst which are well-known academics, including professors and teachers. The project goal was to assess the current state of Hinduism in RE in UK schools as perceived by Hindus in Britain and recommend changes to improve it.

The main findings conclude:

- 97% of survey respondents say it is important and paramount for their child to learn about Hinduism.
- 98% of survey respondents say the study of Hinduism in RE is low quality and deficient.
- 75% of respondents feel that Hinduism is not taught in a positive light.
- 86% of the respondents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the teaching of Hinduism in schools within the United Kingdom. 76% of primary school parents are unhappy about RE teachers' knowledge of Hinduism.
- 81% of Key Stage 3 and 87% of Key Stage 4 parents are discontented about RE teachers' knowledge of Hinduism.
- There is growing evidence of inaccurate resources used by classroom teachers for teaching Hinduism.
- Hindu parents and pupils feel they do not have a choice to study Hinduism at GCSE level.

The full report can be read [here](#).

You can hear NASACRE Executive member, Paul Smalley, commenting on Hinduism in RE [here](#) (06.37 to 14.12).

ClearVision Trust

Agreed Syllabus Conferences who have recommended the ClearVision Buddhist resources, may wish to note that ClearVision has now closed and ceased business.

Items for your next agenda

- Find out and discuss what was your LA's response to the NASACRE FOI request
- Decide who will attend the NASACRE AGM on the 24 May
- Consider who to nominate for the NASACRE Exec, especially for the role of Vice Chair!
- Advertise to SACRE members the **online recordings** of present discussions in the teaching of RE



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