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AGENDA
ITEM 6

**Office for Standards
in Education**

David Bell
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

17 January 2003

Mr Nick Evans
Haringey Council
Civic Centre
High Road Wood Green
LONDON N22 8LE

Dear Colleague,

INSPECTION OF WORK OF STANDING ADVISORY COUNCILS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

I am writing to you to advise you of an inspection that Ofsted will be conducting into the effectiveness of the work of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs).

The work springs partly from concerns raised by some SACREs that proper account should be taken of SACREs' contribution to raising standards in religious education, and SACREs' partnership role, particularly in regard to their work with local education authorities.

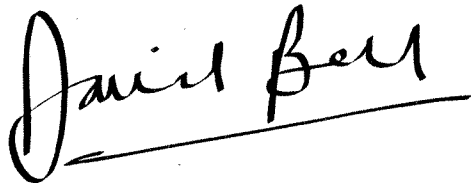
In broad terms, the inspection - which will be led by Barbara Wintersgill HMI - will attempt to gauge how far SACREs can, in partnership with their LEAs:

- Promote high quality, agreed syllabi;
- Discharge their responsibilities effectively;
- Help teachers and schools to raise standards in RE and the quality of RE teaching;
- Help schools improve the quality of collective worship; and
- Contribute towards the social cohesion agenda, particularly in respect of improving religious and racial harmony within the community.

Barbara is in the process of selecting a handful of LEAs and SACREs for her and other HMI to visit over the next chronological year. In those LEAs she selects, she will write both to the chief education officer and the Chair of the SACRE, to establish whether or not those two organisations would be prepared to be involved in the inspection. If the LEA and the SACRE are able to participate in the inspection, then Barbara will provide both parties with copies of the inspection methodology and the inspection notebook, and visits will then be arranged.

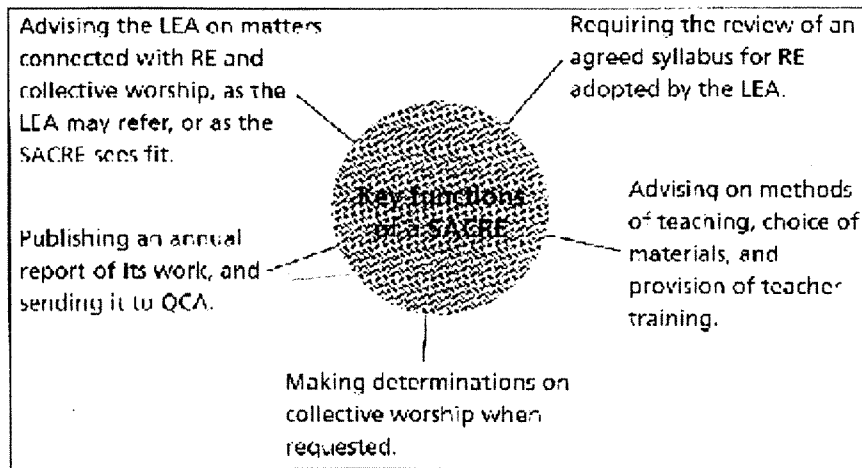
We intend to publish a report on this exercise, and to hold a conference for SACREs and other interested parties in 2004.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

DAVID BELL

SACRE - Preparation for inspection



Some suggested priorities

Questions to answer:

How does SACRE work with other partners to?

a) support teachers and schools in:

- implementing the local agreed syllabus:
- developing and implementing effective schemes of work:
- promoting other curriculum development activities in RE:
- meeting requirements for collective worship:
- maximising the flexibility within the law over organisation and content:
- preparing and implementing schools' post-inspection plans:
- disseminating best practice.

b) monitor RE and collective worship to:

- check on progress over time (against targets);
- check on progress relative to other similar LEAs and SACREs.

c) keep RE and collective worship on the LEA's agenda through timely and informed advice.

d) ensure SACRE's work is reflected in LEA development plans.

Ways in which many SACREs are currently being effective - which relate to our SACRE? (refer to examples please)

promoting partnerships between schools and faith communities;

bringing people together and enhancing community harmony;

producing agreed syllabuses through agreed syllabus conferences which promote

a positive image of the work of SACRE, and which are widely owned;

reminding the LEA of its duties towards RE and collective worship;

reviewing and pursuing OFSTED reports;

producing guidance of good quality, for example on spiritual development, including advice to governors;

monitoring effective alternatives in cases of determinations for collective worship;

training of members;

inducting new members from time to time;

holding lectures and conferences on RE which aid SACRE members' training,

offer training opportunities for teachers, and have a wider appeal;

producing a development plan to improve and measure effectiveness;

hosting receptions for teachers, and networking with schools and teachers;

establishing a resources centre;

involving headteachers and teachers in development work;

using the talents of faith communities.

Other local work:

**Factors which inhibit some SACREs' effectiveness:
Which of these are local concerns?**

lack of funding to:

[a] promote more activities by SACREs;

[b] compensate for withdrawal of GEST designated courses; [

c] meet QCA's request for a new style of annual report;

difficulty in finding adequate teacher representation;

difficulty in advising on the issue of collective worship which SACREs cannot solve;

some discontinuity of membership, especially on the LEA committee, and lack of attendance;

quality of some inspection reports, for example confusing RE with collective worship;

lack of specialist support, through advisers and advisory teachers;

no budget and inadequate resources for some SACREs;

not being kept up to date;

lack of communication with the LEA and other SACREs;

ineffective clerical support at times;

lack of training for SACRE members;

