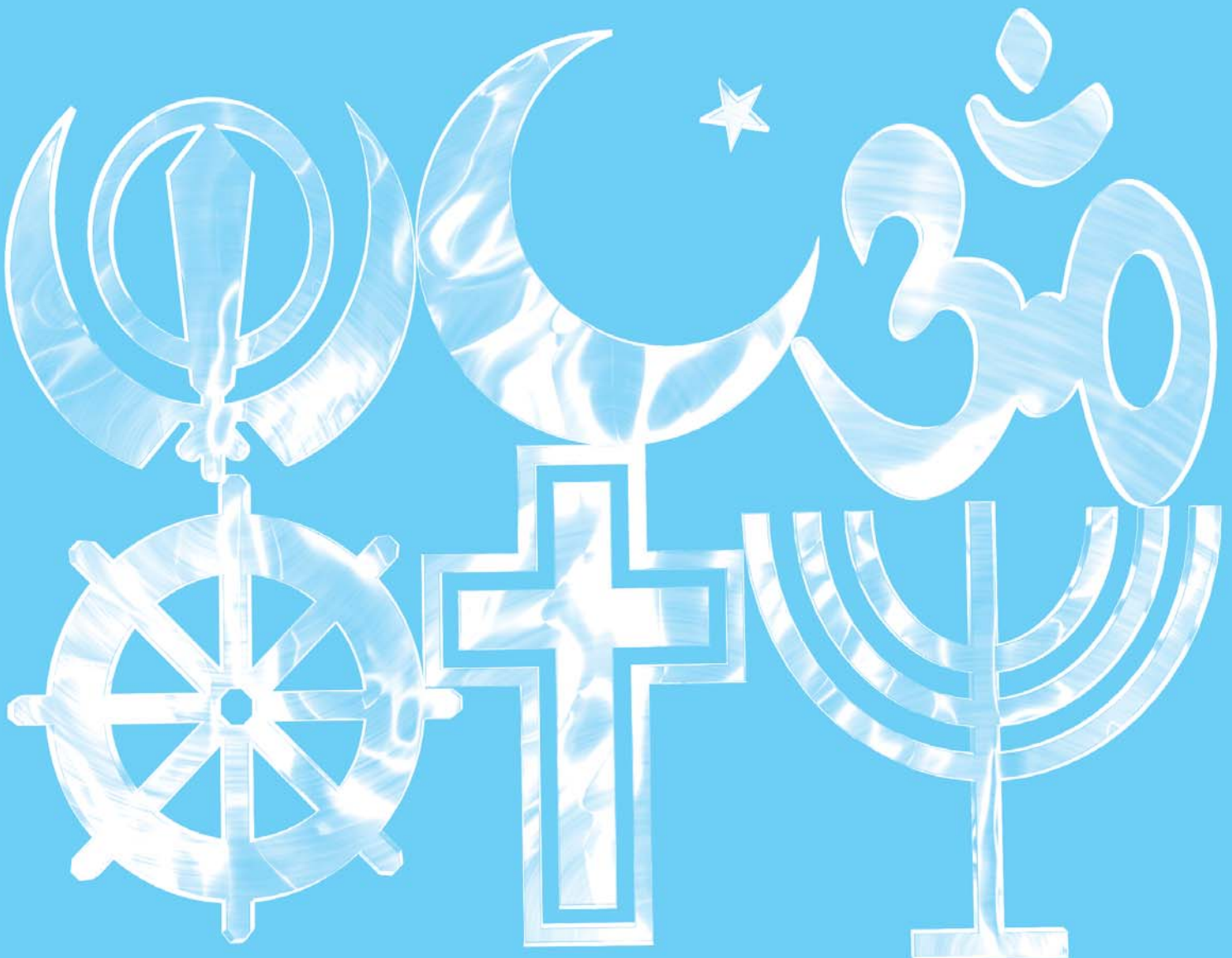


Religious education and collective worship

An analysis of 2004 SACRE reports



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Foreword

Standing advisory councils for religious education (SACREs) continue to be legally responsible for advising local education authorities (LEAs) on religious education (RE) and collective worship. Every English LEA¹ has a SACRE composed of representatives of the LEA, faith communities and teachers. SACREs are required to report annually on the advice they have given. This analysis of SACRE annual reports therefore continues to be an important publication for QCA.

For the past thirteen years, QCA and its predecessor bodies have provided SACREs with a national picture of their work. This not only offers individual SACREs the opportunity to compare their own activities with those of other SACREs, but it provides a summary of the development and review of agreed syllabuses across the country.

This year, as in previous years, many SACREs are involved in the review of their agreed syllabus, but unlike previous years, they do so this year in the light of the new non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education. QCA believes that the new Framework should be fundamental in shaping the next generation of agreed syllabuses, and hopes that Agreed Syllabus Conferences are incorporating it in their reviewed syllabuses. Monitoring how far this is the case will become part of QCA's responsibility to keep the curriculum under review.

Once again, this analysis of SACREs' annual reports indicates the wide range of activities undertaken by SACREs to support RE and collective worship. QCA hopes that it will encourage SACREs to turn their attention more fully to the implementation and support of agreed syllabuses once they are securely based on the Framework. SACREs have great potential to ensure that the quality of RE locally reflects that set out in the National Framework.

¹Except the City of London

Main findings

General

- There were 125 reports available for analysis this year. This is ten more than 2003 but continues to fall short of its potential of 152.

RE

- Provision and standards are mainly continuing on an upward trend. Primary schools have again been marked out for particular praise.
- The significant factors which contribute to good or better RE are: effective subject leadership, including monitoring and support; detailed planning, followed through in teaching and learning and support from senior managers, ensuring adequate time allocation.
- SACREs are drawing on national developments. Whilst the development of the non-statutory National Framework for RE has been regarded as controversial by some, it is clearly being used to inform agreed syllabus review.
- The national key stage 3 strategy is making a strong contribution to RE.
- An increasing number of SACREs are producing detailed schemes of work along with an eight-level performance scale. Teachers are finding these invaluable.
- Statutory RE at key stage 4 is, in the main, being provided by GCSE courses.
- GCSE entries have risen again to record levels. SACREs find it hard to monitor post-16 RE and note that many schools are not meeting legal requirements
- A growing number of reports provided details of AS/A level results. These suggest a slight increase in schools offering courses and an improvement in results. Once again RE was the fastest rising subject at A level.
- There continues to be far more girls than boys entering public examinations in RE and achieving higher grades.
- SACREs are largely dependent on Ofsted inspection reports to monitor RE. There is real concern that the new framework for inspections will not provide the source of data that SACREs have hitherto depended on for their monitoring of agreed syllabuses.
- There is an increasing use of new technologies in school: both in teaching, such as with interactive whiteboards and virtual tours; and as a means of making contact with teachers, such as e-newsletters.
- In-service training is on the decline. In some cases schools have other priorities. In others, there is no one to take the lead on planning and/or delivery in an LEA. Support groups continue to make a real contribution to teachers' development.

Collective worship

- Compliance with legal requirements for the daily act of collective worship remains high in primary schools but is still a significant problem for secondary schools. SACREs report a sense of impotence, as there appears to be either no way of ensuring compliance or of changing the law.
- Wherever collective worship occurs there is recognition that they are generally high quality experiences, contributing to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Monitoring Ofsted reports for collective worship is difficult, as there is rarely enough information for SACREs to make judgements.
- There is little demand for training or advice for collective worship. A small number of LEAs have produced new or updated guidance for schools.
- The number of LEAs that have determinations² in place remains low. Determinations are generally concentrated in specific LEAs.

SACRE arrangements

- Representation and attendance remain a cause for concern in a minority of SACREs. There are some reports of inquorate meetings.
- There is a wide variety of ways of budgeting for the work of SACREs. Some SACREs are able to do little more than actually meet; others have large budgets and the freedom to manage them.
- Many SACREs have a SACRE Development Plan. For some, this is linked to the Education Development Plan and is costed with specific objectives.
- There was a unanimous welcome for HMI inspections of SACREs. All who experienced them used the detailed review to set priorities for their work.
- The joint guidance from QCA and OfSTED on self-evaluation has been well received by SACREs
- Concern has been expressed about the trend to reduce LEA RE advisers and the growing dependency of some LEAs on either independent consultants or advisers who have other responsibilities.

² A determination is an agreement by a SACRE that a school may provide collective worship for some or all of its pupils other than that 'of a wholly or mainly Christian character'

Issues of concern to SACREs

- The introduction of a non-statutory framework for RE was the single biggest issue discussed by SACREs. Some have delayed a review of their agreed syllabus until final publication.
- Teacher recruitment and retention is again a matter of concern for some SACREs, particularly at key stage 3.
- The quality and reliability of Ofsted reports continues to be a cause for concern for SACREs.
- SACREs have again been involved with a vast range of activities over the year.

1 Introduction

1.1 Structure and format

This is the 14th analysis of annual SACRE reports undertaken since the 1988 Education Reform Act. Reports from 125 SACREs were received in time for inclusion in the analysis. This is ten more than 2003. Although this is an improvement it still falls short of the anticipated 152.

The failure of 27 SACREs to meet the statutory requirement of sending QCA an annual report does not invalidate this analysis; however, as only 44 per cent of the SACRE reports make use of the 1997 QCA advisory framework for writing such reports, some aspects of work are missing, and make a standardised annual analysis difficult. The small minority of reports which neither use the framework nor clearly describe their year's work may not be represented in this analysis.

A number of reports express appreciation of the annual analysis of SACRE reports. For some it serves to contextualise their work within the larger national scene; others use it as a tool for reviewing their own work. For many it constitutes at least one agenda item during the year.

The majority of reports analysed relate to the academic year 2003/4, a few to the calendar year 2004, and still fewer report on current matters right up to 2005. For those that meet to compile their SACRE report in the autumn term each year, it is clear that in many cases the report includes events of that term. This tends to result in some overlap and repetition in reporting from one year to the next.

Eighty-five per cent of reports carried a letter, foreword, executive summary or other form of introductory words from their respective chairperson or director of education. Such letters and forewords often give an overview of the year's work and record thanks to particular members who deserve recognition. Some give pen profiles or photos of new members. It is always with sadness that SACREs record the death of committed and long-serving members.

Different SACREs have a range of purposes in mind when compiling their reports. Many reports are exciting documents, written in the form of a newsletter and/or showcasing pupils' work. These are clearly destined for a wider readership than local councillors, QCA and other official bodies.

1.2 Responding to recent events

Some SACREs have responded to continuing public debates about diversity and multiculturalism, particularly regarding Muslim communities and the teaching of Islam. Several have analysed their schools' population for ethnic and religious diversity. They have issued information packs on different religions and advice on withdrawal from RE in the light of sensitive issues. Fresh approaches have been made to faith communities to join SACRE, either on Committee A or as co-options. The following extract sums up many discussions:

Today there are important and increasingly negative challenges to our multi-faith society. It is a great strength of this council that its members from different religious faiths, and none, go beyond tolerance by collectively accepting difference. Through this strength we have seen continuing positive results of supporting stimulating initiatives that invoke challenge and stimulus for our multicultural society

2 Religious education

2.1 Locally agreed syllabuses

It would appear that almost every SACRE that reported has been actively involved with the debate on the non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education. A range of opinions is in evidence (see Section 5.2 below), but for all those SACREs whose agreed syllabus has been due for review it has had a central role to play. The non-statutory National Framework for RE is now published, but for the period this report covers, there was only a draft version in circulation.

The legislation is clear: locally agreed syllabuses must be reviewed every five years. This makes the preparation for and writing of agreed syllabuses central to the cycle of work. Those SACREs who were due to review their agreed syllabus in 2003/4 were left unsure about how to proceed. Guidance from QCA³ led 17 SACREs to delay the review. Most, however, continued their preparation by monitoring the strengths and weaknesses of the LEA's current agreed syllabus both in helping teachers to deliver the RE curriculum and in its ability to raise standards. Some SACREs continued with the process regardless, and a high number of SACREs launched a new agreed syllabus.

From the 125 reports analysed this year, the following activity may be identified:

- 28 SACREs report the approval, adoption or launch of a new syllabus;
- 16 record that an agreed syllabus conference has been convened;
- 11 indicate that the agreed syllabus is under review.

The context for these figures needs to be taken into account. First, they do not provide a complete picture, as the figures are taken only from those SACREs who issued a report and commented on the status of their agreed syllabus. It is not uncommon for the agreed syllabus to get no mention at all. Second, as can be seen from Appendix 1, some of those who report a review in progress are reporting a continuation of work started in 2002/3 or even prior to that date. Third, some reports are unclear about the difference between approval, adoption and launch, which may indeed be happening after September 2004.

It is very rare for an agreed syllabus review to involve a complete rewriting of the agreed syllabus. It is much more usual for a 'new' agreed syllabus to mean the addition or deletion of certain aspects of the old. New syllabuses almost invariably now include an eight-level scale of assessment and schemes of work. Some agreed syllabus conferences make such aspects statutory. Others include them in the range of supplementary materials. One SACRE undertook its review by first formulating seven principles upon which the new agreed syllabus would be developed.

³ 2004 Religious Education. The national non-statutory framework for religious education

- Be built upon collaboration and consultation.
- Be evolutionary not revolutionary; supportive not disruptive.
- Take account of the findings of the 2002 review of the agreed syllabus.
- Draw strongly on recent national developments in RE, particularly the non-statutory National Framework for RE 2004.
- Promote improved teaching and learning in RE.
- Assist schools to provide greater coherence across and within phases and key stages.
- Provide support for teachers.

Twenty-six SACREs have provided statutory or non-statutory sections to their agreed syllabus whether or not they were due for review. Most are very aware of national trends or developments and these may be the impetus for the additions. The following is an example of such work:

The Transition Research and Development Project, funded by both Brunel University and SACRE, has progressed since the planning stages, in 2003. A number of primary and high school teachers, completed a year 6 and year 7 Transition Unit of work for RE during October 2003. There are now 3 skills-based units of work which bridge years 6 and 7 and a transfer record document. Teachers added to this work in 2003/4 by devising a series of year 7 baseline assessment tasks which demand an active learning, thinking skills, questioning and problem-solving approach. Both the transition units and the baseline assessment, distributed to schools on a CD, refer to and complement the agreed syllabus and should contribute to the raising of standards in RE. The next stage is to evaluate the effectiveness of these materials...

Monitoring the syllabus

The majority of SACREs who reported on monitoring the agreed syllabus commented on the increasing difficulty of conducting this task. It is seen as important to have an awareness of the impact of the agreed syllabus on teaching and learning and the raising of standards, especially midway through the five-year cycle. The main obstacle in the way of successful monitoring is the lack of a specialist RE adviser or consultant, who can feed back from face-to-face meetings with teachers, or undertake reviews. Most SACREs rely on evidence from Ofsted inspection reports (see below) or data and key stage 3 results where they are reported.

The following list includes some of the other means used to review practice, which in turn helps set the agenda of RE development within an LEA, often leading to supplementary materials being formulated:

- survey of all schools prior to an agreed syllabus review
- monitoring questionnaires sent to all or a sample of schools regularly
- approaching other LEAs within a group of unitary authorities to look for joint working on specific aspects
- survey on one aspect; ie time allocations
- pilots of the emerging agreed syllabus undertaken in a sample of schools
- teachers' support groups used to gauge opinions
- agreed syllabus review as part of a link advisor's monitoring visit
- review of school self-evaluation audits
- commissioning consultants to visit a sample of schools in the LEA
- use of the RE or SACREs own website to gather opinions
- teachers invited to SACRE meetings to give their own views

-
- monitoring visits specifically to look at the agreed syllabus undertaken between Ofsted inspections
 - an audit tool for use by all schools in LEA

2.2 Standards in RE

Only 10 per cent of reports make specific reference to having an eight-level performance scale, or to their intention to introduce this when the agreed syllabus is reviewed. However, this seems to be because a scale has become a normal part of RE for most LEAs. It is not always clear whether such scales are statutory or non-statutory. Two SACREs have reported that they require all schools to report the levels to them at the end of key stages 1 to 3, five SACREs make reporting at the end of key stage 3 a requirement. This indicates that levels have statutory force in those LEAs.

Several SACREs reported that the use of the eight-level scale has raised standards, especially in secondary schools. They have also made standards more consistent. Yet since assessment is a key concern to emerge from Ofsted inspection reports (see below) SACREs frequently include the issue of standards on agendas, produce materials to help teachers raise them, hold in-service training.

The following illustrates the range of some of the work identified in reports:

- formulating their own eight-level scale
- issuing practical advice on assessment in RE
- formulating 'P' levels for use in special schools
- creating pupil-friendly level descriptors for secondary schools
- collection and dissemination of samples of work to exemplify the levels
- using support groups as moderating groups
- using the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) to support teachers with assessment
- setting up a working party under the leadership of an AST to link planning using objectives to levels
- recommendation of QCA's eight-level scale to their schools
- highlighting task-setting as a means of raising standards
- work undertaken to link the eight-level scale with the programmes of study in the agreed syllabus.

Key stage 3 standards continue to be affected by teacher recruitment. This was mentioned in 18 reports and has been an agenda item for several SACREs.

Ofsted inspection reports

SACRE has a duty to monitor RE and then advise the LEA and its schools if there are issues of concern. Ofsted inspection reports comment on standards, although, with this means of monitoring not available in the future, SACREs are also discussing other methods of fulfilling their responsibilities. Reading and analysing Ofsted inspection reports is overwhelmingly the main method of monitoring RE. Eighty-two per cent of reports state that they undertake this kind of review. Several SACREs comment on such reports school by school; some reproduce the graphs provided by Ofsted, enabling a comparative analysis; some copy extracts from inspection reports to exemplify issues and others give a detailed commentary, including strengths and areas for development.

This being the most important yearly piece of work undertaken by many SACREs, their analysis is used in a variety of ways to make improvements in schools. Several reports state that there is a direct link to the SACRE Development Plan (SDP). Many use the analysis to frame the in-service training programme. There is usually discussion on the most effective way to follow up the issues which arise as a result of inspections.

Thirty-four SACRE reports commented on the paucity of information, inconsistent reporting, use of incorrect information and judgements being made on insubstantial evidence. Some SACREs had written to Ofsted pointing out their concerns. Answers were often frustrating. One report contained the following:

- Some SACREs were concerned that inspectors did not seem to take their local agreed syllabus properly into account...
- SACRE was concerned that in the case of one community primary school the report for RE contained a number of contradictory statements.
- SACRE was concerned that while the Ofsted reports for 2 Community secondary schools indicated that the time allocation was below that needed to meet the requirements in the locally agreed syllabus in years 10 and 11, provision in one school was deemed 'good' and the other 'satisfactory' at this level.

SACREs are keen to discharge their monitoring duty and have done so in a variety of ways.

- A sub-committee analyses Ofsted reports and then takes findings to the full meeting.
- Ofsted inspection reports are a termly agenda item, enabling rapid response to issues.
- The chair of SACRE writes to schools where the inspection has been good.
- The chair of SACRE writes to schools where the inspection has been unsatisfactory, pointing them to support and/or guidance.
- The chair of SACRE passes details on to the LEA for them to take action where the inspection has been unsatisfactory.
- Teachers are invited to SACRE meetings to give the context to their inspection.

Whatever the shortcomings for individual SACREs of monitoring schools in this way, 102 SACREs analysed their Ofsted reports and noted down key indicators of good and less good practice. This gives a countrywide picture of RE. The following is a composite list taken from reports showing strengths. They are not age-specific.

- fully implemented agreed syllabus
- teachers with sound subject knowledge
- careful preparation of lessons
- sensitive issues handled well
- imaginative and creative teaching
- assessment managed well by subject leader and teachers
- good links with citizenship, PSHE and other areas of the curriculum
- targeted questioning
- adequate time allocation
- challenge for the more able
- strong links with literacy
- inclusion of pupils with special needs
- informative marking
- improved time allocation since last inspection
- sound links to personal experiences

-
- brisk pace of lessons
 - RE making a good contribution to SMSC
 - teaching assistants taking a constructive part in lessons
 - good balance between reading/writing/research/discussion
 - assessment guiding planning
 - strong and active subject leadership, where there is a clear vision for RE
 - effective use of resources
 - well-established monitoring of curriculum and teaching
 - clear objectives shared with pupils
 - use of ICT
 - visits and visitors used to enhance the curriculum
 - good balance of AT1 and AT2
 - well-supported and valued by SMT in school.

It is clear that where the reverse is in evidence there is cause for concern. The following aspects were repeated in several reports and are providing the basis for advice and INSET:

- failure to comply with statutory requirements
- consistency across the school in assessing pupils' progress
- provision of RE diverted to PSHE/citizenship
- inadequate time allocation
- insufficient provision at key stage 4 and the sixth form
- development of assessment strategies
- non-specialist staff, particularly at key stage 3, slows the pace of progress
- limited use of ICT
- ineffective task-setting
- poorly-developed AT2
- inadequate support from senior managers
- ineffective subject leadership
- underdeveloped links with local faith communities
- working in a school which has complex weaknesses.

Twelve SACREs mentioned that with only a few schools inspected in any one year, an overall analysis was of limited value and conclusions about the quality of RE could not be drawn safely.

The current issue for SACREs is the change to the inspection framework expected in September 2005. With little or no information anticipated on the subjects it will be important for SACREs to find other ways to monitor RE and provide quality advice to LEAs. Fifteen SACREs reported they are actively working on this

Primary schools

Not all reports separate primary, secondary and special schools out for comment. Where they do so, reports are rarely analytical and mainly descriptive. It is, however primary schools that attract the most praise. They are generally meeting the legal requirements fully. Schemes of work are being used and pupils are meeting expected standards of agreed syllabuses. Specific areas for improvement are often strengthening the role of the subject leader, particularly in relation to monitoring the curriculum along with teaching and learning within the school and developing the role of assessment. A few schools have made other areas of the curriculum a priority to the exclusion of RE.

One report gave a helpful summary of the management of RE in the following passage. The highlights are their own.

Subject management for RE is judged as good in eight out of the thirteen schools and satisfactory in five. The strengths of the good schools lie in 'knowledgeable individuals' who show 'enthusiastic leadership' have implemented the new syllabus 'effectively' into their schools and are able to 'offer good support for other teachers'. They also ensure 'effective planning which builds effectively on pupils' earlier experiences as they move through school' and they are 'good at evaluating the quality of provision' and 'monitoring work outcomes'. One subject manager 'makes the best use of her expertise' because 'she monitors the work of classes she does not teach, by checking the quality of teaching and sampling pupils' work, so she has a clear view of standards throughout the school'.

In almost every case, when a school is deemed to have serious weaknesses or be in special measures, RE provision is unsatisfactory too.

Secondary schools

Most of the LEAs that monitored standards through analysing the Ofsted reports are not big enough to be able to draw conclusions from the small sample. Several reports commented that there were less than three secondary schools with Ofsted reports in their LEA in 2003/4. Some SACREs have access to Section 23 reports and make comments, but as these schools do not have to use the agreed syllabus their findings are less representative.

Areas of concern to emerge from secondary inspections are similar to previous years:

- provision at key stage 4 and in the sixth form
- time allocation at all key stages, but particularly when RE is competing with PSHE/citizenship for curriculum time
- assessment and record keeping
- use of non-specialist teachers at key stage 3 and its impact on standards
- insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning by the subject leader.

Special schools

There were 28 reports which made separate comments about the inspection of RE in special schools. Reports were keen to highlight the successes. The areas for development listed were: assessment recording and reporting, key stage 4 provision and not meeting the statutory requirements. The following is a summary of the key points to emerge:

- schemes of work are in place
- an inclusive curriculum
- the programmes of study from the agreed syllabus have been appropriately modified
- time allocation is satisfactory or better
- SMSC is promoted well through RE
- effective use of teaching assistants
- skilful teaching
- good resources, well used
- local communities, well used
- active learning through role-play
- high standard of display
- entry-level exam success

- sensitive handling of issues
- well led and managed
- clear improvements since the last inspection.

RE was well linked to pupils' personal development. Provision for SMSC was at least satisfactory in all four schools and very good in two. One school had been particularly successful in raising awareness of cultural diversity.

Several LEAs have active network meetings for special school teachers and/or subject leaders

GCSE/GCE

Sixty-seven per cent of reporting SACREs presented specific data for GCSE results in fulfilling their monitoring duties. Some reports make clear that with the difficulties they find in analysing Ofsted reports exam data is the clearest way to build up a picture of standards in RE. There are still, however, a substantial number of schools that are not entering the whole cohort for any RE exam at key stage 4. This makes the picture far from complete. Most data is taken from the exams sat in summer 2004 and is therefore in advance of the period covered by the rest of this report, but it is unclear how many are using older statistics. The following show the variety of ways the data is presented:

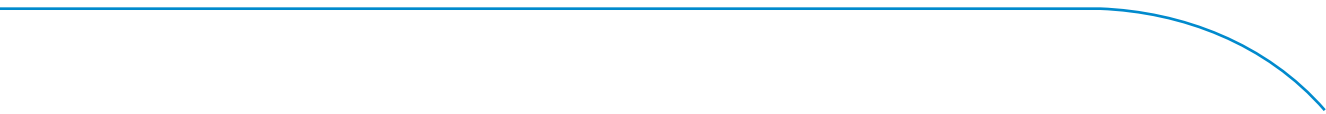
- raw scores with no analysis
- statistical information relating local scores to national averages and statistical neighbours
- acute detail pinpointing outcomes by gender and/or ethnicity
- school-by-school
- graphs to show outcomes set against baseline or other subjects
- comparisons with English or mathematics where a whole cohort has sat the exam
- written analysis summarising the discussions within the SACRE meetings.

Eighty-four SACREs presented data on the GCSE full course. Of these the following general statistics were advanced within the reports:

- 23 stated there was a gender imbalance. It was however clear from a reading of the raw scores that this is still an issue for most SACREs.
- 13 had a decrease in entries.
- Seven felt their results as a whole were skewed by the church schools who entered the whole cohort.
- 29 had increased their entries.
- 33 reported a rise in grades.
- Nine reported a fall in grades.

Eighty-four SACREs presented data on the short course GCSE. Of these the following general statistics were advanced within the reports:

- 21 were concerned about the gender imbalance. It was however clear from a reading of the raw scores that this is still an issue for most SACREs.
- 40 had an increased entry.
- Eight had a decrease in entries.
- 15 reported encouraging trends year-on-year.
- 15 noted that standards had fallen.



Eleven SACRE reports commented about the entry level success, which included all pupils entered in one special school.

The following general points regarding GCSEs emerged from the reports:

- Statistics written as numbers or percentages can tell different stories of success from one year to the next, making comparisons difficult.
- Different ways of presenting the data makes drawing conclusions difficult.
- SACREs express concern where not all schools offer RE or RS at key stage 4.
- The challenge facing teachers in some schools is how to maintain simultaneously high levels of performance in both the short and full GCSE courses.
- There are still instances of RE or RS being taught as top-up courses and not being offered on the timetable. The strain of workload placed on teachers in these circumstances and the issues of parity between subjects remain real.
- Barriers to success in some schools and some LEAs require further consideration.

One SACRE had analysed the results in great detail and then sent specific questions regarding discrepancies between the examination groups to QCA. Answers were not reported.

As more SACREs require schools to report levels at the end of key stage 3, baseline measures from which to predict and analyse key stage 4 results will eventually emerge. It is not clear if this trend is continuing; though those few SACREs which are experimenting with this at key stage 3, have found it difficult to get all the schools in the LEA to respond. For those SACREs where this is working well the monitoring of standards will become even more effective.

AS/A level

Forty-five percent of the reports received provided information about AS and A level entries and results. The reporting of the data is less detailed than for GCSE, including many reports which combine AS and A level data. However, the following general statistics were expressed:

- Nine report a fall in numbers entering AS/A levels.
- 17 had a rise in numbers entering AS/A levels.
- 15 comment specifically that it is mainly girls who enter, especially for A level. It was however clear from a reading of the raw scores that this is still an issue for most SACREs.
- 19 specifically report a rise in standards at A level.

SACREs' responsibilities extend only to schools and AS/A levels are taken in a variety of contexts. The picture is incomplete.

2.3 Methods of teaching, choice of teaching materials, teacher training

A clear message to emerge from SACRE reports is that the work generated by the Council has to be carried out by somebody. It is the link with teachers that drives development forward. In most cases this is undertaken by the RE adviser, or other

advisory colleague, with RE as a specific responsibility working from within the LEA. In a growing number of cases this is a consultant appointed by the SACRE or LEA. The effectiveness of the work is usually dependent on the commitment of this individual, both in hours allocated to RE and support given by the LEA. Many SACREs are now reporting that they have no such person and where this is the case there may be only a limited amount of development work going on in that LEA. Reports express a frustration with this (section 6). Having a website is an important means of sharing information and ideas with teachers, particularly where there is only limited advisory support. Seventeen reports mention theirs, including five SACREs who maintain their own website for teachers to access. There is one report of an online conferencing facility which successfully helps teachers to support each other.

In any case, those SACREs which have or are undergoing syllabus review are usually the most proactive in offering guidance on teaching, teaching materials and in-service training.

Teaching methods

A large number of SACREs report on all three areas as a composite.

Advice and support have been offered to schools on a range of teaching methods. Agreed syllabuses are often more specific about how an element of RE should be handled by teachers and where this is not the case other guidance has been prepared. Key areas to emerge from the reports are as follows:

- schemes of work to support the agreed syllabus
- additional study units written for the scheme of work
- philosophy for children as the heart of RE teaching
- how to move D grade students at GCSE to grade C
- using advanced skills teachers (ASTs) to deliver sample lessons
- using ASTs to work with teachers on planning to meet specified objectives
- encouraging the use of self-review audit tools
- guiding Christian church workers to ensure teaching methods are consistent with agreed syllabuses
- online good practice notice boards
- disseminating Ofsted guidance
- promoting best practice within all communication to schools.

In addition, SACREs have offered advice through a range of publications engaging teachers with RE methodology. These are listed in Appendix 3.

Teaching materials

Many SACREs comment on the importance of developing their own resources or distributing information about resources available. Websites have again emerged as a means of sharing such information and links to other helpful websites are a strong feature of the support offered. SACREs mentioned developing online virtual tours of local places of worship (seven), online learning packages (three) and other online information (14). All these are designed to be accessed by pupils.

It is encouraging to read that RE resource centres or collections remain an important part of the LEA support structure. Twenty-five reports mentioned them, which is, however, a reduction on the 36 mentioned in 2003. A few of the smaller unitary

authorities are pleased to share resources centres. Some comment that schools' own resources are now much improved, making an expensive centre less viable. Regardless of this, 17 reports comment that they have the means to showcase new resources to teachers either through newsletters, at support group meetings or at special events held for the purpose. One SACRE reviews materials for their faith accuracy and then issues guidance on whether or how they can be used in school. Many reports comment on the benefits of diocesan centres and praise the support they give to all schools.

Those SACREs that have annual meetings or conferences and those advisers, who organise subject leaders' conferences, tend to provide displays of the most recent resources. Often the publishers or artefact companies are invited to mount displays of current items.

Eighteen SACREs comment that the LEA distributes regular newsletters. In many cases these are now produced online. In two cases, SACRE produces its own newsletter. These have become the means of involving teachers in sharing ideas and reviewing resources.

A notable feature of the majority of SACREs is the strong relationships that exist with members of faith communities. Several introductions and forewords specifically mention the amount of time devoted to nurturing such relationships, and wish to promote these kinds of relationships in schools. A variety of methods are used. These include: SACREs that have written or updated directories of places of religious importance (11); and SACREs that encourage visits by offering funding to schools (three). Policies on visits and visitors are offered to schools as a model.

The Holocaust Memorial Day in January has become an annual part of the calendar for many SACREs. Twenty-one reports listed their involvement and for many this has given the opportunity to devise new materials to be used in schools.

Teacher training

There is an uneven picture of RE in-service training (INSET) emerging across the country. Again, the biggest variable is the involvement of an RE adviser or consultant in the LEA. Seventy different categories of INSET have been offered to teachers. Five LEAs offered no INSET, six LEAs had to cancel all courses due to a lack of leaders or lack of participants and nine noted a decline in take-up. The picture is clearly mixed, but several key points emerged in the reports.

- Training on a new agreed syllabus is mostly well-funded and attended.
- Funding for teachers to attend INSET and provide for supply cover is difficult for schools.
- Generally, RE is not a priority subject for schools.
- The adviser offers subject leader surgeries at specific times.
- Ten SACREs report INSET run by diocesan boards, which are well attended and sometimes free of charge.
- In small LEAs consortium arrangements exist crossing LEA boundaries, making INSET more attractive.
- NQT courses often include a session or more on RE.
- ASTs are providing INSET, face-to-face advice and/or leadership of support groups.
- Sixty SACREs report healthy support groups meeting regularly in all sectors, including special schools.
- National bodies are offering training, especially where there is no RE adviser or consultant in post.

-
- Joint training is taking place with local universities.
 - Advisers are reporting that, especially with primary RE, improvements are more effective if a school's whole staff experiences the INSET.

The picture is similar to 2002/3. Where teachers are finding difficulties accessing INSET it tends to be because of funding, or RE is not a priority for the school and/or LEA. The increase in support groups available again in 2003/4 may point to an otherwise unfulfilled need among teachers for help and advice.

SACREs continue to mount annual conferences or lectures. These are the highlight of the year for many SACREs and are the opportunity for all parties to meet each other and reflect on current issues. Where these are addressed by high profile national figures the status of RE is increased. There is much comment in the reports about the benefits of SACRE members having regular contact with teachers and schools.

The following is a sample of the range of INSET offered to teachers. Many advisers also invite non-teachers, such as faith community workers, and SACRE members to attend.

- implementation of a new agreed syllabus
- the impact of teaching on learning
- being an effective subject leader
- subject leader conferences
- sessions on specific faiths
- RE in special schools
- thinking skills and RE
- citizenship and RE
- literacy and RE, especially at key stage 3
- RE in the early years
- planning for high order questioning
- assessment
- ICT
- RE for teachers with other specialisms
- visiting places of religious importance
- engaging the disengaged
- using visual images
- 'Excellence and Enjoyment' in primary RE
- working with gifted and talented pupils
- inclusion
- using stillness and reflection
- philosophy for children
- using interactive whiteboards
- meeting the needs of children with differing learning styles
- starters and plenaries
- making RE exciting
- returning to the teaching profession
- using and managing controversial issues
- bridging years 6 and 7.

2.4 Complaints

Eighty-three SACREs reported that there were no formal complaints in 2003/4. Two SACREs noted formal complaints. One concerned the teaching of yoga, which was considered by the complainant not to be an educational activity. The reply was given noting that yoga is widely accepted as a form of exercise and was not being carried out in school as a religious activity. The second LEA had two complaints which have been investigated and not upheld. One LEA had an informal complaint regarding implementing revisions to the agreed syllabus. As these were in schools piloting materials the matter was transitory.

2.5 Other matters

Although they were not mentioned so much as in previous years, national touring exhibitions; such as *The Jewish Way of Life*, the *Anne Frank* and the *Islamic Belief and Practice* exhibitions were again supported by SACREs in 2003/4. These give pupils the opportunity of enriching their understanding of aspects of religious belief and practice. With faith communities involved in their organisation, the links made are invaluable. In addition, the following key areas of work have been undertaken by individual SACREs.

- An annual outdoor performance attracted 8,500 pupils in June 2004.
- A partnership has been formed between a local university and the RE adviser on a project to link schools to their communities which is led by the citizenship adviser.
- The LEA's community cohesion strategy has given RE a central and very important role.
- Faith City – the simulation of faiths for pupils to visit.

Publications produced and reported by SACREs have been listed in Appendix 3. This indicates how much work is being done in any one year to support RE teaching and learning.

3 Collective worship

There continues to be a significant number of reports which give little or no information about collective worship. For some, this will reflect a year when no discussion on collective worship has taken place in any SACRE meeting. For others, this is because it is a low priority or they have struggled to monitor the situation and therefore have nothing they can report. For those that have reported their information is, in the main, gathered from Ofsted reports.

3.1 Advice on collective worship

Fifteen SACREs have published guidance on collective worship (see Appendix 3) Several are in the process of reviewing guidance and some are doing so in conjunction with other advice and support which has been offered to schools as follows:

- advice offered via regular newsletters
- lists of speakers circulated to schools
- self-review tool used with schools
- advice given on withdrawals
- ASTs presenting model assemblies
- collective worship materials given via websites
- guidance on handling a crisis through collective worship
- post-Ofsted advice given.

The most common method of giving advice continues to be face-to-face, in response to individual requests.

3.2 Monitoring

Monitoring collective worship has again been a frustration for a significant number of SACREs. A small minority have attempted to discharge this duty in the following ways:

- questioning teachers during RE support group meetings
- school visits
- requesting link-advisers to gather information for them
- visits to schools with monitoring questionnaires
- SACRE members accepting invitations to attend collective worship in schools.

The most commonly used method for gathering information remains reading Ofsted inspection reports. Seventy SACREs did this in 2003/4. This has not proved an easy matter. The following remarks sum up typical views of SACREs regarding this source of information:

- They do not always stipulate if a school is complying with the legal requirements.
- Judgements are often restricted to comments about assemblies not collective worship.
- Many comments are descriptive not evaluative.
- There is no mention of the quality of collective worship.

- Non-compliance appears as an issue in successive inspections.
- Failure to comply with the law is not necessarily a key issue for action.
- Some inspectors are not familiar with the legal requirements.
- Some inspectors are muddled between RE and collective worship in Ofsted reports.

There is a general consensus that this method of monitoring provides SACREs with insufficient evidence to fulfil its duties satisfactorily.

Of those reports which mentioned it, 42 LEAs have secondary schools which do not meet the legal requirements. It is a source of great worry to SACREs, which feel powerless to do anything. There is a common concern that having unworkable statutory requirements puts them and the schools in an impossible position. Several views are summed up in the following extracts.

It is a fact that many schools have no desire to break the law but are, despite their best efforts, not meeting its requirements. This may be because of the physical difficulty and time needed to get hundreds of children together in a suitable room, although the law allows for collective worship to take place in smaller groups. It may be because of a lack of staff willing to take part.

Many SACREs are aware that the majority of secondary schools are not providing collective worship of a broadly Christian character on a daily basis, but see no obvious solution to this... The principle of supplementing this provision with class assemblies is not easily transferred from primary to secondary.

Also

A majority of SACRE members agree that there is a place for the daily act of collective worship in schools, but maintain that it is the quality of the experience rather than the daily occurrence that is important.

Eight SACREs support a review of the current legal requirements and have invited the Secretary of State to revisit the issue and either make recommendations about ensuring compliance or propose changes to the law.

Where judgements on the quality of collective worship are presented there is a great deal with which to be content. The following gives a composite picture of the strengths across the country. Many SACREs write letters of congratulation to schools where collective worship has been praised.

- thoughtful planning in line with the multi-faith nature of the school
- opportunity to reflect on events locally, nationally and internationally
- contributes to developments in SMSC
- offers insights into the life and values of themselves and others
- raises awareness of wide diversity in society
- supports the ethos of the school
- well coordinated
- involves pupils and recognises and supports good relationships between adults and pupils
- enriched by visiting speakers from faiths and other walks of life
- good links with all areas of the curriculum
- sensitive use of different religious beliefs
- supports and enhances RE
- times of celebration validate pupils own lives.

Other than non-compliance, the two main areas which give cause for concern are missed opportunities for reflection and a lack of planning. Generally, special schools have been praised for the quality of acts of collective worship.

3.3 Training

2003/4 again showed a paucity of provision for in-service training (INSET) for collective worship. SACREs reported that there was no INSET offered and three that any offered was cancelled through lack of support. Only eight SACREs reported that INSET was run. One SACRE has surveyed need and discovered that there is a high demand for materials but a low demand for INSET. Attendees are mainly from primary schools or not from schools at all. Four SACREs reported leading INSET on SMSC. The main issues included in INSET have been as follows:

- the legal requirements and how to meet them
- promoting and evaluating SMSC
- training and advice for those individuals and groups offering 'determined' worship
- planning and delivering collective worship for clergy and other visitors
- crisis management through collective worship.

3.4 Determinations

A total of 85 SACREs reported that they had received no applications for determinations during the past year. The total number of applications from individual schools was 72, with the following results:

- 0 new
- 64 renewals granted
- seven pending
- one not granted
- one determination expired but not sought again
- In addition, 10 schools applied too late and their determinations have been temporarily extended.

It is unclear from these figures how many determinations are currently in operation throughout the country, but it appears that most of the determinations fall in only a few LEAs. One SACRE reported schools in a high area for determinations seeking help with providing 'inclusive collective worship', in an attempt to minimise the need to apply for a determination.

3.5 Complaints

SACREs indicated that no formal complaints about collective worship had been received



during the period covered by their reports.

One SACRE reported that a formal complaint had been received closely allied to a complaint regarding RE.

3.6 Other matters

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is a matter for the Ofsted inspections and as such often monitored by SACREs along with RE and collective worship. Even taking into consideration the references which state that SMSC are frequently muddled by Ofsted, it remains clear that these four aspects are not always of equal strength in a school or indeed an LEA. Moral and social development is often better than spiritual and cultural. SACREs discuss how to influence developments in SMSC, especially bearing in mind that they are whole-school issues, which is a particular difficulty for secondary schools. They conclude that with low take-up of INSET, the main way to impact on schools is through guidance documents, the internet and discussion with other more generalist advisers. Spiritual development is strong within RE and, where it exists, collective worship. Some SACREs are keen to advise on effective spiritual development across the rest of the curriculum. One SACRE has provided an audit tool, which is designed to identify gaps and fill them.

4 Links with other agencies

4.1 National links

SACREs are clearly grateful for the links they maintain with the range of national agencies. Many SACREs, particularly those from smaller or unitary authorities find the support they can get invaluable. The following represent the range of national bodies to which most SACREs are affiliated or with whom many work closely:

- National Association of SACREs (NASACRE)
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- RE Today Services and the Professional Council for RE (PCfRE)
- Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants (AREIAC)
- RE Council of England and Wales (REC)
- European Forum for Teachers of RE (EFTRE)
- Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI)
- Interfaith network.

Eighty-six reports mention membership of the NASACRE, with 54 reporting they sent representatives to the annual meeting. This has become one of the most important national meetings attended each year. It is clear from looking at agendas that reporting back on the meetings is taken very seriously and the matters raised nationally will often frame the work of individual SACREs for much of the next year. Similarly, the QCA SACRE conference is given the same treatment. Sixty SACREs reported that representatives had attended the 2003/4 meetings. As the main area of business at both was the consultation prior to the introduction of non-statutory National Framework for RE the reports gave quite detailed accounts and analysis of views.

The value to SACREs of networking on a national level should not be underestimated and the opportunity to listen to and debate with national figures on the key initiatives of the moment is greatly appreciated. For those who do not have the chance to attend the meetings, the papers circulated by NASACRE and QCA are given equal weight at meetings. It is also clear that visits from QCA and Ofsted personnel are viewed positively and sought actively.

AREIAC offers professional support for the RE adviser and is mentioned in 31 reports. They benefit from attendance at national and regional meetings and the occasional papers published. SACREs clearly discuss these and get another perspective on current issues.

There is a growing trend within LEAs not to appoint RE advisers (see Section 6). In these cases SACREs are making closer links with certain national agencies to receive professional support. RE Today Services was mentioned in seven reports.

Although these are the main bodies which are mentioned in large numbers of reports, there are many other smaller national bodies with which SACREs have links. In some cases they are contributing to research at universities or supporting teachers in gaining awards from bodies such as the Farmington Trust. In addition they seek grants from awarding bodies such as, St Peter's Saltley Trust, St Gabriel's Trust and the Hockerill Educational Foundation.



4.2 Local links

Locally, there is a positive mix of networks with which SACREs are involved. These range from local religious community groups to universities and neighbouring LEAs. RE advisers are sometimes shared and in-service training can be provided on a regional basis. SACRE reports show that there are many healthy links with diocesan boards and centres. Much work has been done to ensure the messages are similar and teachers benefit from such strong advice.

SACREs have worked hard on relationships with the local faith communities and these are a source of great strength and pride. Community leaders and representatives are generally involved at every level and the effects on schools, with access to places of worship and visitors are positive. SACRE members understand the cost to some communities of opening themselves up to tours by schools; especially where they might provide the only non-Christian place of worship in the region; but all can see the benefits too. Some SACREs support such visits by offering grants and training.

Many SACREs take the opportunity to hold meetings at different places within their communities and share in cultural and religious events and celebrations with them.

5 Other issues

5.1 Governor training

There was far less governor training reported in 2003/4 than previous years. Training is usually linked to a new agreed syllabus or other guidance published by SACRE. Most reports did not mention the area at all, but of those that did, 14 stated that no training was offered. Two reports mentioned that a termly SACRE newsletter is sent to chairs of governors, one that SACRE sends briefing notes to be included in their governors' newsletter and one that SACRE gets an input into governors' briefings.

5.2 Other SACRE concerns

A national framework for RE

By the time this report is issued, the National Framework for RE will have been published. The foregoing represents discussions and views during SACRE meetings prior to this and was the biggest single issue discussed by SACREs during 2003/4. The opinions expressed ranged from the actively positive to the acutely negative. The following summarises the most commonly reported points:

- clear commendation for the work and how useful the framework will be when reviewing their own agreed syllabus
- some concern usually in relation to losing local responsibility to a national model
- a fear of the role of SACREs diminishing
- anxiety that schools will misunderstand that the framework is only guidance to SACREs and not a requirement for schools
- concern that some inspectors will be muddled about its legality
- benefit of a national framework for RE raising the profile of the subject
- relief that their agreed syllabus is already in line with national thinking.

Several SACREs delayed the review of their agreed syllabus while they waited for the framework to be published.

Teacher recruitment

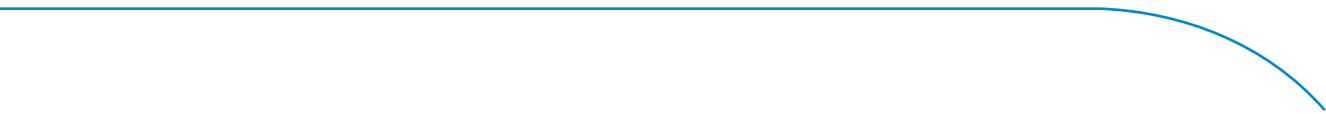
Shortages of specialist RE teachers are not expressed as a major concern in 2003/4, although it is still a problem, particularly for secondary departments. Eighteen SACREs stated that non-specialist RE teachers can slow the pace of progress at key stage 3.

Key stage 3 strategy

Continuation of the key stage 3 strategy has been widely welcomed by SACREs. With funding available for key elements of the curriculum, there has been a positive effect on RE. Within the strategy, training has been focused on such aspects as starters and plenaries, thinking skills and assessment for learning. ASTs have taken a lead role in much of the development, modelling good practice, writing guidance materials and leading INSET.

SACRE initiatives

The following items have been discussed at meetings and in some cases action taken.



While this is not a complete list, the variety shown here exemplifies the distinctive nature of localities throughout the country and the concerns that teachers have:

- social inclusion
- supporting requests for specialist school status – humanities and RE
- concern about SACREs' monitoring role with Ofsted's new proposals for inspections
- concern about RE in a new academy and the role of SACRE
- withdrawals from RE in the light of unease from some parents regarding Islam
- contribution of SACRE to an LEA's race equality guidance
- concern that anti-Islamic websites are accessible to pupils
- funding issues for SACRE
- a SACRE initiative, connecting communities
- how to respond to schools that continue to flout legal requirements even after several inspections
- citizenship and RE
- combating racism
- mounting a young people's conference
- SACRE website
- impact of the six-term year on the delivery of RE
- code of conduct for faith members working with pupils
- opening of new faith schools
- SACRE award for excellence in RE.

6 SACRE arrangements

6.1 Professional and administrative support

Meetings

Seventy-three SACREs have one meeting per term. Most have additional working parties, some of which are standing committees set up to analyse Ofsted reports, pre-meeting planning or as RE reference groups. Twenty-six SACREs have chosen to hold four or more meetings per year. The reports clearly show that there is a correlation between attendance and quantity of meetings. The more SACRE meetings there are per year the less good attendance is. Some reports are not clear whether meetings are for normal SACRE business or reconstituted as agreed syllabus conferences. Two SACREs hold two meetings per term: one as a business meeting and the other for development, which has considerably more teachers contributing. Working parties are also formed on an ad hoc basis where necessary.

SACREs could not run efficiently without the support and assistance they receive from administrative and clerical staff; this is universally recognised and appreciated. Some reports show confusion between the clerk to the SACRE and the clerical support or minute taker.

Although LEAs have made rooms available for SACREs to hold their meetings a growing number of SACREs see the benefits of holding meetings in schools or faith community buildings. These meetings usually begin with a tour and a talk by the head teacher or faith representative. It leads to increased understanding by all concerned. Only 19 reports indicated they always held meetings in LEA premises.

Many introductions to reports comment on the range of people they have invited to attend their meetings. Teachers are commonly asked to make presentations and bring forward ideas and comments for the SACRE to debate. Some SACREs have been attended by pupils who always impress with their enthusiasm and the quality of responses.

Timings of meetings are to suit members, but the most preferred time is during the school day, when teachers can be released from lessons and participate effectively. Some SACREs have lunch and/or committee meetings prior to full meetings; some start meetings with a time of quiet reflection and others have a short presentation by members from a personal perspective before the business gets under way.

Over the year SACREs have not only produced guidance for schools and advised the LEA on matters within its remit, in many cases they have also reviewed their own working practices and updated them where necessary. Many of those SACREs that have experienced difficulties in attendance have taken time to review their own constitution and one SACRE set up a working party to look at membership, procedures and meetings. One SACRE had its own weekend conference which enabled teambuilding to take place.

Representation and attendance

Representation and attendance remain a cause of concern for several SACREs. Discussions about membership have resulted in various practical solutions:

- a revolving chair to keep the burden to a minimum for all members

- membership solved by co-options
- questionnaire circulated to gather information about barriers to membership
- varying timings to try to suit different people
- keeping the meeting date to the same weeks in each term.

SACREs reported their attendance figures. At least 13 SACREs had meetings which were inquorate, limiting the effectiveness of their work. One SACRE had 82 per cent attendance during 2003/4, but figures were as low as 27 per cent. The majority of SACREs have attendance in the region of 60 per cent. Attendance is not a particular problem for any one committee, but recruitment is an issue for committee A.

In some smaller unitary authorities SACREs meet jointly, making meetings more effective. With some members representing more than one SACRE the workload is reduced for those individuals.

Professional support for RE

Forty-five reports identified that they had a specific LEA RE adviser available to clerk the meetings and/or do follow-up work in schools as required. The figures do not show how many of these work full time for RE and how many have other duties within the advisory service. There is a growing trend not to appoint an LEA RE adviser and SACREs have made creative use of budgets to appoint consultants. Forty-one reports mentioned that they had part time consultant support from a range of providers:

- retired or redundant LEA RE advisers
- RE adviser from a neighbouring LEA, especially in unitary authorities
- former heads of department
- professional services set up to offer RE INSET and advice
- diocesan personnel.

Thirteen reports specifically mentioned that they had no professional allocated to support the work of SACRE or RE development in their schools. Forty SACREs benefit from an LEA officer in attendance at meetings. Fourteen SACREs have been pleased to work closely with advanced skills teachers, although this figure is probably considerably higher.

Ofsted inspections of LEAs

Ten reports made reference to their LEA being inspected by Ofsted in 2003/4. In the main the experience is limited, both in its impact on the SACRE and in what SACREs can learn about themselves. Four SACREs stated that the report for their LEA made positive comments about their SACRE. One SACRE was pleased to be invited to speak with inspectors about criticisms it had made regarding inaccuracies in Ofsted reports of schools. One SACRE supported Ofsted's view that there was poor communication between schools and the LEA.

HMI inspections of SACREs

Eleven SACREs reported that they had been inspected by HMI. These inspections have been unanimously welcomed. They have provided the opportunity for self-review; significantly raised the profile of RE and SACRE throughout LEAs; given SACREs a new lease of life; highlighted the activities undertaken over a year and allowed action plans to be written in which development is important. Most either quoted extensively from the final report, or indeed printed it in full as an appendix coupled with the action plan written in the light of key issues.

One of the many highlights of this year came when the SACRE was part of the Ofsted inspection of SACREs – a highlight not only because we had very good feedback but also because it focused our attention on ways in which we could make further progress.

The following gives a composite picture of the strengths of SACREs as identified in the HMI reports:

- effective chairing
- carries out its statutory duties
- gives good guidance with its agreed syllabus
- effective at securing the involvement of its teachers
- well-developed procedures for monitoring standards and provision
- benefits from members with a high level of commitment and enthusiasm
- has a good relationship with the LEA
- guidance provided supports the agreed syllabus well
- comprehensive support for collective worship
- SACRE in conjunction with the LEA is making an important contribution to inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding
- good level of professional support provided by the LEA
- the educational development plan supports the work of the SACRE development plan
- links well to the wider social inclusion agenda.

The following gives a composite picture of the areas for concern as identified in the HMI reports. Where necessary, SACREs must:

- develop guidance for the LEA
- extend the monitoring of standards
- improve guidance to schools, especially for collective worship
- link their SACRE development plan to the education development plan
- analyse exam data to provide a clear picture of RE in the LEA
- become proactive not merely responsive
- contribute to the LEA's social cohesion agenda
- clarify roles for the chair and other key positions
- ensure the agreed syllabus conference considers the non-statutory national framework for RE
- advise the LEA on teaching methods, training and resources
- follow up problems with schools as they occur.

Several SACREs, in the light of HMI inspections, expressed the desire to have a self-evaluation framework which could be used as a tool for improvement.

SACRE development plans

SACRE development plans (SDP) are being used by many as the key means of organising priorities and, in some cases, funding requirements. In 2003/4 SDPs are given less status than in 2002/3. Only three SACREs stated that the SDP was an agenda item at each meeting, 21 reported that there was an ongoing review each year, four noted progress with issues, eight have linked the SDP with the education development plan (EDP) and 14 included a fully written-up and annotated SDP as an appendix.

6.2 Finance

SACREs commented on their financial arrangements. There is clearly a wide variety of ways of budgeting for the work of SACRE. Some LEAs earmark very little money, but offer 'days' for management of the council and support work. Some SACREs have to bid for projects, which, if successful, are then funded. Others are allocated a budget and then given freedom to spend as they wish. Some are required to reallocate funds to faith communities and oversee how this is spent. Five SACREs reported that they had no delegated budget. The figures ranged from the lowest at £50 (it is not stated what this is for) to the highest at £26,900 (with an additional £20,132 for one year only). The following categorises the allocations.

■ £50 to £2,500	10 SACREs
■ £2,501 to £5,000	seven SACREs
■ £5,001 to £10,000	13 SACREs
■ £10,001 to £15,000	six SACREs
■ £15,001+	five SACREs

In several cases, caveats were made about how money could be spent. It is usual, that if an agreed syllabus is to be developed or launched, funds must be set aside for all costs, including printing and any celebration. In most cases there is money available for meeting costs, including supply cover for teachers and travel expenses for all members. Several SACREs have indicated a reduction in funding. And for some, funding of any magnitude is only available if it appears as a priority in the EDP. Some SACREs are able to generate some income of their own by selling publications, but this is reduced with the advent of the internet.

What emerges from the reports is that there are three main ways of funding SACREs: direct funding, the allocation of advisory time and a combination of both.

7 Conclusions

This analysis of SACRE reports offers an insight into the vast range of activities undertaken by SACREs throughout the country. The list of 18 different items bears witness to the hard work of all involved. It would be a mistake to assume that the agenda is the same in every locality. Issues can be quite specific to one or more LEA and may not make any impact in another part of the country. For example, a few SACREs have been struggling with withdrawals, while trying to understand the issues for parents in a politically-charged environment. This is quite different from those that have been working on getting greater representation from faith groups and tackling inquorate meetings. It is clear that whatever the issues, meetings provide a clear forum for respectful debate.

SACRE members show commitment to raising standards in RE and support for quality experiences in collective worship. The shifting of emphasis away from collective worship is coupled with a frustration which emerges from the reports about their impotence in this area. The vast majority of SACREs that were inspected by HMI were delighted by the process and regarded it as an important measure of how effective they are. There is a great appetite for SACRE self-review.

Monitoring is a key element of the work of all SACREs and it is undertaken very seriously. There is high level of concern about how conclusions can be drawn if the data received from Ofsted is not consistent and/or reliable. There is also a considerable worry about how this work will be done in the future as the inspection framework changes.

A high number of SACREs were in the process of reviewing their agreed syllabuses in 2003/4 and this work was done in the light of non-statutory guidance being widely debated, but not then published.

A great strength of SACREs is the emphasis on working with many elements of local communities. All parties are committed to pupils' educational development and in some cases SACRE is a beacon of good practice in LEAs. The benefits of sustaining relationships between schools, other education professionals, faith communities and local politicians are immense. Another strength is provided by links made with national bodies which in turn support individual SACREs. For many, national conferences and meetings help members to keep abreast of issues.

Most SACREs are again reporting improvements in both provision and standards in RE. This is in the face of difficulties over funding, limited access to INSET, greater priorities given to other initiatives and diminishing professional advice available from an RE adviser or consultant.

Appendix 1

SACRE reports submitted in 2004 and the dates of adoption of the LEAs' agreed syllabuses

LEA	Date of agreed syllabus adoption	2004 SACRE report
Barking & Dagenham	1995, under review, ASC convened	Not received
Barnet	1999, ASC Convened	Received
Barnsley	1999, ASC convened	Received
Bath & NE Somerset	Somerset syllabus adopted 1999, under review	Received
Bedfordshire	2001	Received
Bexley	1999	Received
Birmingham	2002	Received
Blackburn & Darwen	Lancashire 2001 syllabus adopted	Received
Blackpool	Lancashire 2001 syllabus adopted	Received
Bolton	1997, statutory supplement 2002	Received
Bournemouth	Using review with Poole	Received
Bracknell Forest	2000	Received
Bradford	2001	Received
Brent	2002	Received
Brighton & Hove	1999, ASC convened delayed waiting for national framework	Received
Bristol	1999, ASC Convened	Received
Bromley	2002	Received
Buckinghamshire	1995, under review, ASC convened	Received
Bury	Revised 2002	Received
Calderdale	2003	Received
Cambridgeshire	2003	Received
Camden	2003	Received
Cheshire	2001	Received
Cornwall	1999, ASC Convened	Received
Coventry	2002	Received
Croydon	2001	Received
Cumbria	1998, under review	Received
Darlington	Launched 2003	Received
Derby	Launched 2003	Received
Derbyshire	2001/2002	Not received
Devon	2001(with Plymouth and Torbay)	Received
Doncaster	2001	Received

LEA	Date of agreed syllabus adoption	2004 SACRE report
Dorset	1998, under review	Received
Dudley	2001	Received
Durham	2001	Received
Ealing	1999, ASC Convened	Received
East Riding	1999, ASC convened with other LEAs in Humberside	Received
East Sussex	1999	Received
Enfield	1997, ASC convened	Not received
Essex	2002	Received
Gateshead	1998, delay waiting for the national framework 2004	Received
Gloucestershire	2000	Received
Greenwich	1996, under review, ASC convened with Lewisham	Received
Guernsey	1996	Received
Hackney	2000, ASC convened	Received
Halton	2001	Received
Hammersmith & Fulham	2003	Received
Hampshire	2004 with Portsmouth and Southampton under review	Received
Haringey	2002	Received
Harrow	2000	Received
Hartlepool	1999, delay waiting for national framework	Received
Havering	2000	Not received
Herefordshire	2001	Received
Hertfordshire	2000	Received
Hillingdon	2000	Received
Hounslow	2001	Received
Isle of Wight	2001	Not received
Isles of Scilly	Using Cornwall syllabus	Not received
Islington	2002	Received
Jersey	1996	Received
Kensington & Chelsea	No information	Received
Kent	2000	Received
Kingston upon Hull	2000, ASC convened with other Humberside LEAs	Received
Kingston upon Thames	2001	Received
Kirklees	2000	Received
Knowsley	Adopted Wirral syllabus 1999	Received
Lambeth	2000	Not received

LEA	Date of agreed syllabus adoption	2004 SACRE report
Lancashire	2001	Received
Leeds	2001	Received
Leicester	Launched 2004	Received
Leicestershire	Launched 2004. Received Lewisham key stage 4 in 1996, key stages 1–3 2000. ASC convened	Received
Lincolnshire	2000	Received
Liverpool	2002	Received
Luton	2001	Received
Manchester	Launched 2003	Received
Medway	2000	Received
Merton	2001	Not received
Middlesborough	1998 under review	Received
Milton Keynes	Launched 2003	Received
Newcastle upon Tyne	1997, under review, ASC convened, waiting for framework	Received
Newham	2003	Received
Norfolk	1997, ASC convened, waiting for framework	Received
North East Lincolnshire	ASC convened with other Humberside LEAs	Received
North Lincolnshire	1999	Received
North Somerset	Launched 2004	Received
North Tyneside	1998, ASC convened waiting for framework	Received
North Yorkshire	Launched 2004	Received
Northamptonshire	1999, ASC convened 2002	Received
Northumberland	Launched 2004	Received
Nottingham	Using Nottinghamshire syllabus	Received
Nottinghamshire	New syllabus 2003	Received
Oldham	2003	Received
Oxfordshire	1999	Received
Peterborough	2002	Received
Plymouth	2001 with Devon and Torbay	Received
Poole	1998, under review	Received
Portsmouth	2004 with Hampshire & Southampton	Received
Reading	2000	Received
Redbridge	2001	Received
Redcar & Cleveland	1999, reviewed 2003/4	Received
Richmond on Thames	2000	Received

LEA	Date of agreed syllabus adoption	2004 SACRE report
Rochdale	2002	Received
Rotherham	1999, review underway	Received
Rutland	2004 with Northamptonshire	Received
Salford	1998	Received
Sandwell	1998	Not received
Sefton	2002	Received
Service Children's Education	2003	Received
Sheffield	Reviewed 2004	Received
Shropshire	Launched 2004 with Telford & Wrekin	Received
Slough	2000	Received
Solihull	2000, under review	Received
Somerset	Launched 2004	Received
South Gloucestershire	Launched 2004	Received
South Tyneside	1997	Received
Southampton	2004 with Hampshire and Portsmouth	Received
Southend-on-Sea	Adopted Essex syllabus 2004	Received
Southwark	2001, review completed will seek to adopt Greenwich	Received
St Helens	Adopted Leeds syllabus 1999	Received
Staffordshire	Launched 2004	Received
Stockport	Launched 2004	Received
Stockton on Tees	Launched 2004	Received
Stoke on Trent	2003	Received
Suffolk	1995	Not received
Sunderland	Launched 2004	Not received
Surrey	2002	Received
Sutton	2001	Received
Swindon	2000, review pending	Received
Tameside	1999, ASC convened	Received
Telford & Wrekin	Launched 2004 with Shropshire	Received
Thurrock	Launched 2003	Received
Torbay	2001 with Devon & Plymouth	Received
Tower Hamlets	1997	Not received
Trafford	1993	Received
Wakefield	2003	Received
Walsall	1999	Not received

LEA	Date of agreed syllabus adoption	2004 SACRE report
Waltham Forest	1998, ASC convened	Received
Wandsworth	2001	Received
Warrington	Under review 2003	Received
Warwickshire	2002	Received
West Berkshire	2000	Received
West Sussex	2003	Received
Westminster	1998	Received
Wigan	1999	Received
Wiltshire	1999	Received
Windsor & Maidenhead	2000	Received
Wirral	1999, delayed due to framework	Received
Wokingham	2000	Received
Wolverhampton	1997, ASC convened	Received
Worcestershire	1995	Not received
York (City of)	Adopted East Riding with City of York supplement 2002	Received

Appendix 2

Religious studies examinations results 2004

National provisional AS GCE results. Percentages of religious studies results by grade and gender.

The figures in brackets are equivalent to provisional figures for 2003

Type	Gender	Number sat	A	B	C	D	E	U
AS level	Male	5,911 (4,978)	20.9 (19.0)	23.1 (20.4)	21.4 (22.0)	14.9 (16.8)	10.5 (11.3)	9.2 (10.5)
	Female	14,170 (12,304)	23.7 (21.7)	24.9 (23.7)	21.4 (23.2)	15.2 (15.1)	8.7 (9.2)	6.1 (7.1)
	Total	20,081 (17,282)	22.9 (20.9)	24.3 (22.8)	21.4 (22.8)	15.2 (15.6)	9.2 (9.8)	7.0 (8.1)

Type	Gender	Number sat	A	B	C	D	E	U
A Level	Male	4,137 (3,589)	24.6 (24.3)	28.9 (26.9)	24.5 (24.9)	13.8 (14.4)	5.9 (7.0)	2.3 (2.5)
	Female	10,281 (9,082)	25.1 (22.5)	31.0 (29.6)	23.9 (25.4)	13.6 (15.0)	5.0 (5.5)	1.4 (2.0)
	Total	14,418 (12,671)	24.9 (23.0)	30.5 (28.8)	24.1 (25.3)	13.6 (14.8)	5.2 (6.0)	1.7 (2.1)

Type	Gender	Number sat	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
GCSE short course	Male	120,804 (109,256)	3.7 (3.8)	8.8 (7.6)	14.6 (13.6)	18.6 (18.6)	15.5 (16.5)	13.9 (14.9)	11.3 (11.3)	8.0 (7.8)	5.6 (5.9)
	Female	126,101 (114,629)	7.5 (7.9)	13.8 (12.3)	18.7 (18.2)	19.9 (20.3)	13.9 (14.9)	10.9 (11.5)	8.0 (7.6)	4.8 (4.7)	2.5 (2.6)
	Total	246,905 (223,885)	5.6 (5.9)	11.4 (10.1)	16.7 (15.9)	19.2 (19.4)	14.7 (15.7)	12.4 (13.2)	9.6 (9.4)	6.4 (6.2)	4.0 (4.2)

Type	Gender	Number sat	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
GCSE full course	Male	59,717 (56,001)	6.3 (6.3)	14.4 (13.2)	18.5 (17.9)	18.9 (19.0)	14.7 (14.5)	10.8 (10.8)	7.8 (7.9)	4.8 (5.3)	3.8 (5.1)
	Female	81,320 (76,303)	11.6 (11.2)	20.5 (18.7)	21.6 (20.7)	17.7 (18.7)	12.0 (12.2)	7.7 (8.3)	4.8 (5.1)	2.4 (2.8)	1.7 (2.3)
	Total	141,037 (132,304)	9.4 (9.1)	17.9 (16.4)	20.3 (19.5)	18.2 (18.8)	13.1 (13.2)	9.0 (9.3)	6.1 (6.3)	3.5 (3.9)	2.5 (3.5)

Type	Gender	Number sat	Entry 3	Entry 2	Entry 1	Ungraded
Entry Level Certificate	Male	4,901 (4,900)	35.9 (31.1)	37.6 (37.8)	21.3 (23.0)	5.2 (8.1)
	Female	3,756 (3,686)	46.9 (44.1)	34.1 (33.1)	16.0 (17.5)	3.0 (5.3)
	Total	8,657 (8,586)	40.7 (36.7)	36.0 (35.8)	19.0 (20.6)	4.3 (6.9)

Type	Gender	Number sat	D	M	U
Advanced Extension Awards	Male	38 (43)	15.8 (20.9)	7.9 (27.9)	76.3 (51.2)
	Female	80 (82)	15.0 (9.8)	12.5 (21.9)	72.5 (68.3)
	Total	118 (125)	15.3 (13.6)	11.0 (24.0)	73.7 (62.4)

Appendix 3

Publications produced by SACREs 2003/4

Religious education

SACRE	Publications
Bolton	Support materials for levelling pupils' work
Cheshire	CD Rom – Starters and plenaries
Derbyshire	Promoting respect for Islamic culture
Devon	Teaching about Islam in the primary school Post-16 religious education
Greenwich	Complying with the legal requirements for RE Self-review audit tool for community schools
Haringey	Self-review booklet for RE departments
Hillingdon	Parental guide – RE, collective worship and SACRE
Kingston Upon Thames	Leaflet for places for worship
Lancashire	Advice on assessment tasks leading to levels
Leicester with Leicestershire	Study visits to places of worship
Peterborough	Information leaflet for parents of year 9 students
Somerset	Preparing for RE inspection
Staffordshire	Appendix to primary support material – differentiated objectives Support materials for key stage 3 – assessment Inspecting RE in Staffordshire schools 2004–2005
Sutton	Relationship between RE and citizenship
Wandsworth	Religious education and spiritual development

Collective worship

SACRE	Publications
Barnet	Guidance on collective worship
Camden	Updated advice on determinations
East Sussex	Guidance for visiting speakers when taking part in collective worship
Essex	Guidance on collective worship
Gloucestershire	Guidance on collective worship
Halton Borough	Guidance on collective worship
Hammersmith and Fulham	Guidance on collective worship
Hartlepool	Guidance on collective worship
Herefordshire	A guide for inspirational worship – work in progress
Islington	Guide to seeking a determination
Lancashire	Advice on withdrawals for RE and collective
Leeds	SACRE statement on collective worship
Medway	Guidance on collective worship
Stoke on Trent	Collective worship – policy and guidance
Swindon	Guidance on collective worship

Other

SACRE	Publications
Bexley	Publicity leaflet for SACRE
Bradford	Guidance on Ramadan
Hillingdon	Supporting bereaved children For one reason only – Ramadan guidelines
Lewisham	Revised guidance on fasting during Ramadan
Somerset	Code of conduct for representations of religious communities working with children and young people

About this publication

Who's it for?	Members of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs), local authorities, advisers and inspectors of RE, others interested in the work of SACREs
What's it about?	The work of SACREs in England in 2003/4
What's it for?	To give a picture of recent developments in RE and collective worship in England
What next?	SACREs and others will use this information to continue to raise standards of achievement in RE and the quality of collective worship. A further analysis of SACRE reports will be published next year



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