

**STANDING ADVISORY**  
**COUNCIL FOR**  
**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

*Annual Report*  
**2014 - 2015**

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## **FOREWORD**

This has been an exciting year for Religious Education in Plymouth and for all members of Plymouth SACRE. This report contains much to celebrate and even more to contemplate and consider as we bridge the school academic years.

Following the launch of the Plymouth Agreed Syllabus: “Engaging with Religion and Worldviews” in July 2014, the academic year 2014-2015 has been primarily about the consolidation and support of Religious Education in school. The syllabus clearly indicates that “We seek to create and develop a Religious Education syllabus that every school will want to provide and every pupil will want to study” and schools across the city have been doing just that.

Young people and teachers are to be congratulated on their engagement, enthusiasm and success in Religious Education, a year that has seen the best results at GCSE A\*-C for over ten years, an increasing numbers of teachers engaging in the Learn Teach Lead Religious Education (LTLRE) Project and attending events and conferences, and a desire for young people and teachers to work together in an increasing number of projects and events, including the welcome return of Mr Solly Irving to the Holocaust Memorial Day events, 2015.

Whilst nationally, regionally and locally the debate surrounding Religious Education continues to provide column inches, here in Plymouth, SACRE looks to the reports of our local schools by OFSTED and finds much good happening. Reports comment on both the teaching and learning taking place in Religious Education, and to wider implications of encouraging young people to uphold their beliefs and their individual belief systems within the school communities, making them safe and welcoming places to live, learn and grow. We could say that these are the true British Values at work in the heart of our school communities in Plymouth.

I would like to thank all my SACRE colleagues for their enthusiasm and commitment in supporting and raising the profile of Religious Education in our schools, colleges and across the City.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Jonathan Marshall, our hard working Adviser to SACRE for his guidance and support in helping the four groups of SACRE to work for the good of all young people, and to Lynn Young, our Democratic Support Officer, who ensures that the meetings are orderly and recorded correctly for all to see and celebrate Religious Education in the City of Plymouth.

MarkAndrew Dearden

Chair of Plymouth SACRE  
January 2016

## **INTRODUCTION**

Plymouth SACRE is pleased to produce this report as a summary of its work in religious education and collective worship. It provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on its deliberations over the last year and to inform others of its work.

SACRE is a unique organisation and amidst the challenges and issues we face, concerning the place of religion in schools and society, there has never been a more important time for the teaching and learning of RE in schools.

## **I RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **1.1 The Agreed Syllabus**

In late 2013 and during the first two terms of 2014 SACRE representatives from Devon, Plymouth and Torbay SACREs met together as an Agreed Syllabus Conference to agree a new, revised syllabus for their respective schools. A small Working Party was convened and a new syllabus for Plymouth schools was the result of these discussions.

In short, by maintaining the scope, balance and structure of our previous syllabus “Every Child Matters in RE” established over the previous six years, we wanted to build on this solid foundation and integrate some new emphases, particularly around our local Plymouth heritage and diversity whilst enabling children and young people to explore their own spiritual journey.

Over the first year of the new syllabus’s introduction, feedback has been very positive. Our flexible approach has allowed and indeed encouraged teachers to take account of further national influences and developments in Religious Education.

## **2 STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **2.1 Background to exemplification of standards.**

**2.1.1** For several years now the absence of specific Ofsted comments during Inspection on Religious Education has meant that SACRE has lost a major “intelligence gathering” tool. Since January 2012, a new Ofsted Framework for Inspection removed the requirement for Inspectors to report on Community Cohesion. However, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development and now, the promotion of British Values are together viewed as key judgements contributing to the overall effectiveness of the school.

**2.1.2** SACRE continues to encourage all schools to use the excellent resources now available, nationally, through excellent websites such as REonline; The Religious Education Council and NATRE. Links to these and other sites can be found on our recently established, local SACRE/RE website on Plymouth Council’s School Room page.

RE curriculum development moves on and over the past year we have embraced the changes and challenges of “Assessment without levels”

## **2.2 Examination Results in Religious Studies (Provisional)**

**2.2.1** This year 12 Plymouth Secondary Schools entered a total of 755 candidates for the full GCSE examination in Religious Studies. This represents 28% of the year groups in these schools. 72% of students achieved grades A\*-C, this represents the best results for over ten years, and 98% achieved A\*-G grades.

**2.2.2** Owing to a different way of “counting” qualifications, short course and Entry Level data was not available to be included in this report.

**2.2.3** 11 Secondary Schools entered a total of 110 students for the Advanced Level Religious Studies examinations. 100% achieved grades A\*-E.

**2.2.4** 7 Secondary schools entered a total of 25 students for AS level and 96% achieved grades A\*-E.

NB: This figure represents the aggregated results for Year 13 students only. The results for Year 12 students entered for AS level are NOT included.

**2.2.5** SACRE congratulates all the candidates and their teachers on their outstanding achievement at this summer’s examinations in Religious Studies.

## **3 COMPLAINTS ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

No complaints about religious education have been received by SACRE.

## **4 TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

### **4.1 Plymouth Centre for Faiths & Cultural Diversity**

SACRE continues to support the innovative work of the Centre which is seen as a unique and major resource for schools to support and extend the development of high quality RE at all levels.

This year the Centre, which operates as a Charitable Trust, is in its 15<sup>th</sup> year. With a number of staff changes this will undoubtedly be a time of transition.

The Centre’s central aim is to promote education and understanding of world religion and cultural diversity. Through the exploration of different beliefs and cultures, the common thread of human and spiritual values is revealed. These are the values that ensure the future security and well-being of our local and international community. These values are therefore central to the promotion and development of community cohesion and well-being in schools.

The Centre continues to provide schools with a wide range of services. This year a record 65 schools subscribed to the Centre and over two-hundred visits were made by Faith Speakers, including to non-subscribing schools. Most popular visits to places of worship were to the synagogue and Islamic Centre. Most popular visits to schools were from Jewish, Hindu and Muslim speakers. The feedback from these visits has been extremely

positive regarding the impact they have had on classroom learning and to the promotion of respect and understanding of religious and cultural diversity.

Solly Irving, a Jewish Holocaust survivor from London, spent four days with us in January. This was his 15<sup>th</sup> annual visit in the preparation for Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). He visited ten Secondary Schools/Colleges, where students listened, with fixed attention, to Solly's personal testimony, which he entitles; "Destined to Survive".

Working together, Plymouth's Advisory team, SACRE and the Centre staff also organised a very successful HMD schools event at the Roland Levinsky Building on the University campus. Over one hundred and fifty young people attended during the day and a number of schools actively took part including The Military Kids Choir and the Young City Laureate.

Plymouth HMD events received a great deal of local press and television coverage this year and Plymouth was also nominated to receive one of the special commemorative candles distributed nationally.

## **4.2 Courses, Conferences and Meetings**

Two SACRE members attended the South West SACRE Conference at Dillington in March which always proves supportive and encouraging.

The RE Adviser continues to support the LearnTeachLead RE project as a Steering Group member. The third annual conference for teachers was held in Cornwall in October and was very successful. There is a real appreciation of the support and inspiration this project offers to our RE community. With national RE speakers, the theme was "The Learning Journey in RE; leading the way through religious understanding".

From this innovative project support hubs have been created across the Southwest region. Our Plymouth hub is led by Ian Hartley (Ridgeway) and Katie Freeman (Hyde Park Infants). These provide a great source of support with activities and inspiration for teachers across all key stages. The group now meets each term, (six times a year) and numbers attending can reach forty!

Katie Freeman attended the NATRE conference in London in January. It was extremely well attended by teachers from around the country.

A new conference was held in April, funded by the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance. The main speaker was our old friend, Lat Blaylock, Editor and Adviser from RE Today. Lat's enthusiasm and creativity ensured the day was a great success and source of inspiration. Katie Freeman's contribution was vital and appreciated in making this all possible.

## **5 Collective Worship**

### **5.1 Monitoring and offering guidance on Collective Worship**

Ofsted reports rarely mention Collective Worship and despite national concerns about non-compliance the Government have no plans to revisit the issues. At its July 2012

meeting, SACRE considered a document produced by NASACRE “Collective Worship Revisited” as a possible way forward and suggested resource/guidance for schools.

## **5.2 Complaints**

No complaints about collective worship have been received by SACRE.

## **6. LINKS WITH OTHER BODIES**

### **6.1 Devon and Torbay SACREs**

As stated under 1.1 above, SACRE members from the three Authorities came together for some initial meetings at the beginning of discussions regarding the new Agreed Syllabus.

Much of the new syllabus remains common to all three Authorities.

The annual SW SACRE Conference at Dillington also provided a wonderful opportunity for colleagues to meet and share ideas and provide mutual support.

### **6.2 NASACRE**

SACRE acknowledges the central role of NASACRE in providing essential support, representation and guidance for local SACREs in the vital role they perform. The Annual Conference always provides an opportunity for SACRE representatives to meet and consider best practice and ways forward in these extremely challenging times for RE.

In May, Cllr. Dr. David Salter attended the AGM and provided SACRE members with detailed feedback at their summer meeting. The keynote speaker was the Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke. Cllr. Salter directed members to the NASACRE website for a full report on the conference.

## **7. SACRE ARRANGEMENTS AND PRIORITIES**

SACRE meets once per term and is supported by the following staff from Plymouth City Council: The Independent RE Advisor and a Democratic Support Officer.

Priorities have continued to be guided by SACRE’s responsibility to monitor standards within Religious Education and Collective Worship.

### **7.1 Development Plan for 2014 - 2016**

Priorities during this period have taken account of the limited RE Adviser time (20 days per year) and the need to encourage and support teachers following the introduction of our new syllabus, “Engaging with Religion and Worldviews”. Following lengthy discussion the Development Plan for this period will focus on three key areas:

- Support and training for teachers to develop creative and innovative schemes of work to support the new syllabus and the new emphasis of heritage, diversity and spirituality
- Curriculum projects to promote good quality RE resources especially in response to national and local developments, including SACRE grants

- Support for on-going events (e.g. Solly Irving and HMD), talks and promotion of RE and SACRE's work. Support for a Muslim youth forum



## APPENDICES

### A Religious Studies Examination Statistics 2001-2015

Examination - GCSE Full Course	Number of schools (Total = 17 secondary schools, 2009 onward = 16)	Number of candidates	% of year group entered in these schools	Boys	Girls	% A*-C	% A*-G
2015	12	755	28.0	277	478	72.0	98.0
2014	11	752	27.0	267	485	69.0	98.0
2013	14	900	31.6	344	556	66.7	98.3
2012	15	970	36.7	387	583	62.9	97.5
2011	13	766	32.1	306	460	68.3	97.0
2010	11	600	30.3	288	312	66.0	96.0
2009	13	643	27.2	299	344	70.8	98.8
2008	13	570	25.0	239	331	67.0	99.2
2007	14	606	24.8	237	369	55.9	97.7
2006	12	620	28.7	269	351	59.2	95.2
2005	12	646	32.8	270	376	59.0	95.5
2004	13	622	27.1	262	360	69.3	97.6
2003	12	599	28.8	232	367	49.9	91.0
2002	10	506	33.7	197	309	61.5	93.1
2001	11	481	30.0	186	295	55.7	95.4

Examination - A Level	Number of schools (Total = 15 secondary schools, 2010 onwards = 16)	Number of candidates	% of year group entered in these schools	Boys	Girls	%A-E (A*-E from 2011)
2015	11	110	8	30	70	100
2014	11	100	8	30	70	100
2013	9	95	7.8	31	64	100
2012	10	117		45	72	99.1
2011	9	120		48	72	95.8
2010	10	110		36	74	96.4
2009	13	119		45	74	99.2
2008	12	126	5.4	61	65	100
2007	11	108	5.0	48	60	100
2006	9	77	8.8	23	54	98.7
2005	8	89	11.9	35	48	100
2004	10	75	4.3	23	52	100
2003	10	69	8.3	22	47	100
2002	8	64	9.4	15	49	98.4
2001	6	31	5.9	10	21	96.8

<b>Examination - AS Level</b>	<b>Number of schools (Total = 15 secondary schools, 2010 onwards = 16)</b>	<b>Number of candidates</b>	<b>% of year group entered in these schools</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>%A-E</b>
2015	9	25	2	4	21	96
2014	9	26	2	11	15	96
2013	9	30	2.5	15	15	90
2012	10	42		17	25	88.1
2011	9	32		11	21	90.6
2010	8	31		11	20	93.5
2009	9	21	1.2	7	14	95.2
2008	9	32	1.8	16	16	93.8
2007	9	29	1.7	13	16	93.1
2006	7	27	4.1	9	18	77.8
2005	10	20	2.4	4	18	81.8
2004	10	46	2.7	10	36	91.3
2003	6	27	5.3	9	18	92.6
2002	6	22	3.6	7	15	95.5

## **B LIST OF ORGANISATIONS TO WHICH REPORT IS SENT**

Our report will be sent, in electronic form, to Head teachers, Principals and Chairs of Governors of schools including voluntary schools, the Local Authority and NASACRE. It will be made available to teachers and parents on request.

The report will also be sent to the Directors of Services for Children and Young People and Chairs of SACRE in Devon, Torbay and Cornwall.

## **C THE DUTIES OF SACRE**

SACRE primarily gives advice to the Local Authority about religious education in Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. It can give advice even if the Local Authority does not seek it, but the Local Authority is not obliged to act upon it. In two areas, however, SACRE's decision is binding.

### **Worship 'Determinations'**

It has a duty to make a 'determination' if a community school applies for complete or partial exemption from the requirement that most acts of worship in a school term shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character reflecting the broad tradition of Christian belief in a manner appropriate to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils. (For example, there may be a preponderance of pupils of a faith other than Christianity.) It is important to note that SACRE cannot exempt a school from the requirement to provide some form of worship (even if not Christian worship) for all pupils on every school day. The act of worship need not be in the morning or for the whole school at one time and it is open to individual parents to withdraw their children by arrangement.

There have been no applications of this kind in Plymouth.

## Review of Agreed Syllabus

At the end of 2013 Plymouth SACRE asked a representative from each of the four houses, together with the RE Adviser, to serve on the Agreed Syllabus Conference, convened by Devon County Council – it was chaired by Jeremy Roberts. This work took place and with further input from a specialist group, the launch of the new Revised Agreed Syllabus, “Engaging with Religion and Worldviews” was held at Plymouth Council House in July 2014.

### Why a Report?

An Annual Report has been a legal requirement since the 1988 Education Act. The Education Act 1996, section 391.6 states:

‘The Council shall in each year publish a report as to the exercise of their functions and any action taken by representative groups on the Council under Sub-Section 3 above during the last preceding year.

(Sub-Section 3 refers to the procedure for requiring a review of the Agreed Syllabus). The Council's report shall in particular:

- a) specify any matters in respect of which the Council has given advice to the Authority;
- b) broadly describe the nature of the advice given; and where any such matter was not referred to the Council by the Authority, give the Council's reason for offering advice on that matter’.

## D SACRE MEMBERS 2014 - 2015

**Group A: Christian and other religious denominations, not including Church of England.**

Eight places

Shelley Catchpole	Baptist Church
Ian Kavanagh	Buddhist Community
Dr Jatindra Saha	Hindu Community
Bakari Arabi	Muslim Community
Anna Kelly	Jewish community
Ms Helena Mitchell	Methodist Church
Vacant	Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth
Vacant	United Reformed Church

**Group B: The Church of England, appointed by the Exeter Diocesan Board of Education**

Five places (three vacancies)

Cathy Slow	Diocesan Board of Education, Exeter
Mrs Catherine Bowness	Diocesan Board of Education, Exeter
Ms Penny Burnside	Diocesan Board of Education, Exeter
Ms Katie Freeman	Hyde Park Infants School
Mrs Alison Sturgeon	Diocesan Board of Education, Exeter
Mr MarkAndrew Dearden	University of St. Mark & St. John

**Group C: Teachers' Associations, who should nominate RE teachers**

Nine places (three vacancies)

Mr Martin Edmonds	NASUWT
Ms Gwen Hughes	NUT
Mr Pete Grainger	PASH (NAHT)
<i>Vacant</i>	NATRE
<i>Vacant</i>	VOICE
<i>Vacant</i>	UCU
Ms Elizabeth Hill	PAPH (NAHT)
Mrs Alison Bradley	ATL
Mrs Heather Farrow	Special Schools

**Group D: The Local Authority**

Six places

Councillor Mary Aspinall	Plymouth City Council
Councillor Paul Jarvis	Plymouth City Council
Councillor Jonny Morris	Plymouth City Council
Councillor Jonathan Drear	Plymouth City Council
Councillor Dr David Salter	Plymouth City Council
<i>Vacancy</i>	Plymouth City Council

**Co-opted Representatives**

Six places

Miss Caroline McVicker	AST (Secondary)
Dr Clare Hamon	Quaker Community
<i>Vacancy</i>	Greek Orthodox Community
Rev Gordon Cryer	Plymouth Association of Governors
Ben Kerr	Humanist
Barbara Wintersgill	RE Consultant

**Officers**

Mr Jonathan Marshall	Consultant Religious Education Adviser
Miss Lynn Young	Democratic Support Officer

## **E. NUMBER OF MEETINGS, RECORD OF ATTENDANCE AND A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MAIN ISSUES DISCUSSED AT EACH MEETING**

Plymouth SACRE meets once per term and has met on three occasions in the academic year 2014 – 2015.

The Autumn Term meeting was held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 at Central Methodist Hall. Plymouth. Sixteen members and two officers were present and the issues discussed included:-

- New members and membership update
- SACRE Annual Report for 2013/14
- Examination results – summer 2014
- Development Plan
- The Learn Teach Lead RE Project
- Plans for Holocaust Memorial Day – “Keep the Memory Alive”
- Local RE news and developments
- South West SACRE conference in March 2015 at Dillington House

The Spring Term meeting was held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the Council House, Plymouth. Fifteen members, two officers and one guest speaker were present and the issues discussed included:-

- Welcome to new members and membership issues
- SACRE Development Plan
- Learn Teach Lead RE Project – Linda Rudge, Project Director
- Feedback and discussion, from morning’s training session
- Parental Right of Withdrawal from RE
- Letter from Lord Nash
- Local and National RE issues
- Feedback on HMD
- NATRE conference
- Plymouth SACRE/RE website launched
- Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity

The Summer Term meeting was held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at the Council House, Plymouth. Sixteen members and two officers were present and the issues discussed included:-

- Welcome to new members and membership update
- Review of the SACRE Development Plan and budget
- LearnTeachLead RE project – Plymouth Hub news
- Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity – staff changes
- Feedback from South West SACRE conference
- The All Party Parliamentary Group on RE
- Feedback on NASACRE conference
- Response to Lord Nash’s letter and Ofsted Inspections in Devon
- The Prevent Duty – implications for schools and RE

Clerk to SACRE – Lynn Young – Democratic Support Officer  
Consultant RE Adviser to Plymouth SACRE – Jonathan Marshall