

Annual report of the North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the school year 2010/11



Introduction

At the end of the summer term we said goodbye to two key members of the Advisory Council. Our thanks go to Dr M Hayward, who was originally co-opted onto the council and has since provided many years of valuable support. We also celebrated the retirement of Mr Mike Holyoak, the local authority adviser to the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), who has provided valuable professional advice and support during a period of great change in the political and educational climate. We extend to him our warmest thanks for his direction and wish him all the best for a long and happy retirement. His role is being taken on by Ms Rebecca Mason with support from her colleague Ms Georgia Miller, both are Education Development Advisers for the Humanities 0-19.

Over the last academic year the SACRE has met three times, once each term. The members have received presentations about aspects of religious education (RE) teaching and collective worship in schools and settings. They have also debated a range of issues raised by different stakeholders arising from religious education and collective worship in North Yorkshire schools.

The report that follows provides more detailed information about examination results and the experiences that our pupils and young people are gaining from their learning. We are continuing with last year's inclusion of cameos of good practice in schools which have brought the report to life and helped us to celebrate the achievements of teachers of RE in schools across North Yorkshire.

I am again very pleased to be able to commend this annual report to school governors, headteachers and their staff, and to members and officers of the county council.

Nasr Emam

SACRE Chair 2010/11

The SACRE welcomes any comments on, or enquiries relating to, this report, which should be addressed to Ms.Rebecca Mason, Humanities Education Development Adviser, North Yorkshire County Council, Children and Young People's Service, County Hall, Northallerton, DL7 8AE. Email Rebecca.mason@northyorks.gov.uk

Executive summary

There is no evidence to suggest that RE provision in schools is not compliant with the locally agreed syllabus, but we recognise that organisational issues in a number

There were no complaints registered with the local authority and SACRE in 2010/11 in respect of religious education or collective worship.

No determinations were requested by schools.

No school has been found to be failing in its statutory duties in respect of collective worship, whilst noting that a number of secondary schools continue to use their best endeavours to achieve full compliance.

The number of pupils entered for GCSE full course Religious Studies fell this year and the results also dipped, falling below the national performance at grades A* to C.

GCSE short course numbers also declined, but there was a slight improvement in A*-C grades and results are now above the national level.

At A2 level there was a decline in the number of entries, but 100per cent of candidates

entered for A level achieved a grade, 37.6per cent at grades A*/A, which was higher than national average performance.

Teaching and learning in RE in North Yorkshire's primary schools and early years and foundation stage settings is at least satisfactory with some good and outstanding features.

At key stage 3, there is no evidence to suggest that teaching and learning in RE is anywhere less than satisfactory, much being good; whilst at key stage 4 and post-16 there is more variation.

Subject leader network meetings have been less well attended over the last 2 years and were cancelled at the end of the summer term 2011. However, from this September 2011 they were re-launched as part of the new service level agreements with twilight network meetings in secondary schools running in four areas across the county in the Autumn term. Regional Primary Humanities network meetings were also established and the coming spring term meetings in 2012 will focus on RE.

The SACRE met three times during the year.

¹ *In respect of requests for exemptions from the legal requirement for broadly Christian collective worship.*

Statutory compliance in respect of religious education and collective worship

The SACRE. is pleased to report that it has no evidence to suggest that RE provision in schools within the jurisdiction of the local authority is not compliant with the Locally Agreed Syllabus. However, as in previous years, there is some evidence to suggest that too little time may be judged to be allocated to RE teaching and timetabling arrangements in a number of secondary schools may make compliance difficult .

National Curriculum and public examination requirements continue to change in order to create more flexibility for schools to address their individual needs. An increasing range of ways to judge school performance are also emerging, including the English Baccalaureate. The climate in which schools are operating is becoming increasingly difficult. Subjects like RE are becoming increasingly vulnerable. SACRE may therefore have a more important role in ensuring that schools comply with their statutory duties regarding provision of RE and collective worship.

There were no complaints registered with the local authority and SACRE. in 2010/11 in respect of religious education or collective worship.

In the period 2010-11 no North Yorkshire school has been found to be failing in its statutory duties in respect of collective

worship. A number of secondary schools are using their best endeavours to achieve full compliance faced with logistical difficulties.

As in previous years, no determinations were requested by schools¹.

Standards and achievement in religious education

Foundation stage

Whilst the statutory requirements in respect of RE do not apply to pupils who are under compulsory school age, the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage highlights a number of requirements in relation to their personal, emotional and social development, and their knowledge and understanding of the world, which prepare them for the RE they will follow in key stage 1. On the basis of the general monitoring visits made by the local authority to early years and foundation stage settings, there is no evidence to suggest that standards and achievement are in any way significantly different to those nationally expected.

Key stages 1 and 2

On the basis of evidence acquired through subject Ofsted inspections, a number of school visits by advisers and discussions with head teachers and subject leaders, standards in RE in primary schools are on the whole satisfactory, whilst in many schools they are good. Overall pupil progress in RE is at least satisfactory in the majority of North Yorkshire primary schools, with some good and outstanding features.

Key stage 3

Visits made to a number of secondary schools on the basis of advice and support requests and targeted interventions indicate that standards in RE at key stage 3 are broadly in line with national expectations. Overall pupil progress in RE at key stage 3 is rarely less than satisfactory and is often good, with some outstanding features.

Key stage 4

In 2011, 1724 students were entered for the GCSE full course in Religious Studies, 31per cent of the cohort (an increase of 1.8per cent of the cohort on the previous year), and 1669 for the short course, 30per cent of the cohort (a decrease of 4.5per cent on the previous year). The performance in the full course fell by 8.8per cent from the previous year, and the short course results improved by 0.8per cent. Overall, nearly two-thirds of the North Yorkshire year group were entered for a GCSE in religious studies, 97.5per cent being awarded a grade.

GCSE Grades A* - C			
	2011	2010	2009
Full GCSE	68.8%	77.6%	75.1%
Short GCSE	53.1%	52.3%	58.7%

In the absence of nationally validated data at the time of writing, it is estimated on the basis of interim data that North Yorkshire's GCSE results for the full course at grades A*-C are just below national performance, whilst for the short course results are just above national performance.

Post-16

In 2011 101 students were entered for 'A' level Religious Studies, compared to 156 in the previous year and 204 in the year before that. 100per cent of candidates entered achieved a grade, 37.6per cent a grade A*/A, 5per cent more than the previous year. 6.9per cent were awarded the A* grade.

In the absence of nationally validated data at the time of writing, it is estimated on the basis of interim data that North Yorkshire's A and AS level results remain broadly consistent with national performance.



Quality of teaching and learning in religious education

Foundation stage and key stages 1 and 2

Teaching and learning RE in North Yorkshire's primary schools and early years and foundation stage settings is at least satisfactory with some good and outstanding features. Supported by the 64 planning units, primary schools are continually developing their strategies for enjoyable and challenging RE experiences. As well as focusing on the explicit RE curriculum, many schools successfully forge links with other subjects,

thus creating a more meaningful context for RE, such as in history and geography. Exciting and lively opportunities for pupils to extend and display their RE learning are also used, such as through music, art and information technology. Many primary schools are also enriching their study of world faiths through UK and international links and global school partnership.

Askrigg Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Village primary school in Wensleydale with 36 pupils.

Teaching and learning and the curriculum:

Religious Education is taught through making links with other subjects through cross-curricular themes, e.g. RE and Geography a local study of Wensleydale, and the wider world, e.g. Extreme Environments. Links with history are made in The Tudors and Buried Treasure (Vikings). Future themes include Fair Trade and The Ancient Greeks (Olympics).

The key RE ideas and concepts are set in the context of the theme the pupils are studying. For example, when studying the Vikings, pupils learn about pagan beliefs and this is linked to exploring the idea of 'what is a religion?' Using their knowledge of what makes a religion, pupils investigate whether Buddhism could be classified as a religion and at the same time develop a knowledge and understanding of aspects of Buddhism. They also experience a meditation session and create meditating hands and incense burners from clay. As a result of their learning one year 5 pupil commented, "Today I have learned not only the importance of rules in Buddha's life, but also the important rules in my life".

In KS1 there is a strong focus on pupils 'finding' the key messages from Religions/

faiths through reflection on their own life experiences, for example when they investigate Buddhist shrines, the focus is on the special/sacred spaces children have in their own lives such as a quiet place in the garden and explaining why this is important to them. They are encouraged to make connections with themselves and the rest of the world and tackle those tricky questions surrounding deity and human choices and consequences throughout each RE topic.

The focus of the learning, whatever the topic, is two-fold: firstly to learn about religions and secondly to learn from religion. There is also a focus on comparisons between religions –identifying what aspects are similar (e.g.festivals) and what are different? The big learning objective is for children to recognise and begin to understand their own values and to be able to communicate these to others. The school's ethos places value on diversity and community, as well as creativity and sustainability. These values are easily expressed through an examination of faith. As far as possible the school uses experiential learning and creative, hands-on activities to ensure the engagement of their young learners.

In many primary schools, higher level teaching assistants continue to make a valuable contribution to the teaching of RE In these schools consideration should be made to their individual professional development

needs in order to ensure the maintenance of standards, achievement and quality within RE provision and teaching and learning.

Lothersdale Community Primary School

4-11 Primary school with approximately 110 pupils on roll

Leadership and management:

In March 2008 the school had an RE subject inspection and achieved outstanding in all areas. To maintain these high standards the school has put systems in place to monitor and audit provision and outcomes for children. The school now has a three year subject audit cycle in place for the humanities foundation subjects (geography, history and religious education). The subject coordinator organises the review. It includes lesson observations, pupil work scrutinies and learning plans. The outcomes are recorded in a report that covers:

- Standards: attainment and progress
- Pupils' attitudes and development
- Curriculum planning
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Management of the subject

The completed report is presented to and discussed by governors and action points/recommendations are recorded.

The school uses the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus scheme of work alongside the 'Respect for Everyone' units developed by RE Today, which contribute to community cohesion and other aspects of personal development. Units of work are 'chunked' together in a block rather than in bits over time, e.g. Judaism was covered as a topic

for one week and linked to both Literacy and Art.

There is also a debating group at lunchtime- "Let's get thinking" which provides an opportunity to discuss philosophical questions, e.g. "Is it ever right to steal?" which link to aspects of RE learning. Visits to a range of local places of worship add to pupils' learning experiences. These visits have been arranged through the Connecting Communities Project.

Assessment of progress is evidenced through written work or through teacher observations of discussions and questions asked and answered. Each year group has an assessment file for RE that provides evidence of planning and assessment. Teachers annotate lesson plans and assessment activity sheets to record pupil outcomes in relation to expectations. The files are used to adapt and plan for progression and differentiation for the next units. The files are passed on to the next class teacher to ensure continuity.

Levels are not reported to parents for R.E, but statements in written reports are linked to the subject assessment criteria contained in the level descriptors and focus on how the child is progressing as a learner.

Some schools continue to make good use of resource boxes provided by the Development Education Centres, Diocese and Faith groups. In the context of the largest county in England, mostly rural in character, it is recognised that it is often difficult for pupils in some schools to experience a range of religious places of worship first hand or to host visits from members of faith communities other than Christian. This situation is often made worse by the high transport costs involved in providing educational visits where longer journeys are required.

Key stages 3, 4 and post-16

At key stage 3, there is no evidence to suggest that teaching and learning in RE is anywhere less than satisfactory, whilst there is evidence of much good and some outstanding practice.

At key stage 4 and post-16 there is more variation in the quality of teaching and learning in RE. In the public examination courses offered within student options, it is largely good with some outstanding features. The quality is sometimes less secure in non-examination situations where statutory RE is provided through integrated courses or during tutor group or form time. In these situations there are often high levels of non-RE specialist teaching, often compounded by shortage of time to deliver a meaningful learning experience.



Thirsk School and Sixth Form College

An 11-18 community secondary school, with 1080 pupils on roll

Religious Studies has a high profile at Thirsk School and Sixth Form College and there have been consistently good examination results over time. The school has benefitted from an established RS teaching team who have designed and resourced an engaging and stimulating KS4 programme of study to fit the specification. All students follow the 'Social and Religious Studies' pathway which includes the PSHCE programme and the full course GCSE in Philosophy and Applied Ethics (OCR B) over a 3 year period (Y9,10 and 11). Students receive 4 hours of learning a fortnight.

The GCSE course focusses upon Christianity and the different perspectives within the religion. The learning starts with a real life issue which is relevant to the students, eg, abortion, and then the issue is explored from different Christian perspectives. The department aims to make the curriculum as contemporary as possible and design learning activities that are active and engaging. Use is made of current news clips and articles to support the teaching. This new syllabus has a significant emphasis on the evaluation of

knowledge (worth 50per cent of the final mark). Lessons are therefore planned to ensure students develop and practise this skill. In 2011 78per cent of all students achieved grades A*-C, with 39per cent of them achieving the higher grades of A*-A.

The teachers use the classroom walls as a learning support for students through displays of significant quotes from sacred texts or religious leaders to use during their work. The subject leader said, 'it is a privilege for my colleagues and I to be able to deliver this programme to our students and to know that it is making a difference to them in terms of both their academic achievement and their life as a whole'.

Students clearly respond to the team's commitment to their teaching.

One sixth form student said she was grateful to the department as 'the effort in lesson planning was outstanding'. A GCSE student felt RS was enjoyable because 'we learn about lots of different topics, there's a lot of variety'. In Key stage 3 students said they liked RS because the lessons always involve lots of paired and group work.

There are a number of secondary schools offering a rich and diverse programme of educational visits to support their RE curriculum, as well as global partnership links to enrich the wider curriculum. The use of information technology in RE remains the significant area for development in some secondary schools.

The local authority's two advanced skills teachers for RE (secondary) continue to work closely with schools providing advice, support and training to good effect. All schools can request support from them at no cost. Each AST has one day per week for outreach work. They have also made a significant contribution to the intensive support provided by the local authority in secondary schools causing concern to ensure benefit to the teaching and learning of RE within the whole curriculum. They also contribute to subject development network meetings and represent teachers at SACRE meetings. In addition to the two secondary ASTs we also have one primary AST supporting all 3 humanities subjects. She also provides support for RE in primary schools and represents primary teachers at SACRE meetings.

The quality of the RE experience in a number of secondary schools continued to benefit from their partnership with the University of York St John and Trinity and All Saints College in the training of new RE teachers, some of whom gained teaching posts in North Yorkshire schools.

Special schools

Separate Regulations covering maintained special schools require them to ensure that as far as practicable a pupil receives opportunities to explore RE. There is no evidence to suggest that this is not the case in special schools within the local authority's control. There are examples of good practice in both the teaching and learning experiences. Special schools make good use of the planning units in their planning and assessing progress in RE using the local authority guidance accompanying the P Scales.

Springhead School and Specialist College for Cognition and Learning

A maintained community special school for pupils with special educational needs. There are 46 planned places, for pupils aged from 2-19.

Religious Education at Springhead is delivered according to the pupil's age and understanding. For some pupils this involves trying to create or visit environments that inspire awe and wonder. For other pupils religious education is delivered as part of their topic work and at special times of the year. All pupils have lessons devoted to religious education. The

school aims to raise pupil's awareness of other religions and cultures through their approach to the curriculum and special multicultural events and assemblies.

Sixth form students, many with severe and complex learning difficulties, are studying Christianity and social lifestyle. The learning intention of this topic is to focus on how

students respond to Bible stories and reflection on the ways in which stories they have heard relate to their own experiences, circumstances and feelings.

The use of different Christian symbols and stories within Christianity is the starting point at which to develop student's understanding of the history and meaning behind them. An Altar was set up each week with a multi-sensory focus of candles, images, objects, symbols, incense, bread and wine to display the main symbols of Christianity.

Students were asked 'what do Christians believe?' Students listened to some of the beliefs of Christians on request.org. Discussion focussed around what students thought about these, did they agree or disagree with these views. Discussion continued about what we think God/ Jesus looked like. Students began this investigation by considering their own physical attributes and then looked at a variety of images from around the world. Students also looked at the symbols that represent Christianity. These were viewed through a range of tattoos that allowed students to look at everyday recognisable forms of art, but from a different perspective.

Students were engaged and motivated. Students questioned and debated the different images of Jesus and students were surprised that Jesus could have been black, that one image portrayed Jesus as a woman. This discussion continued after

the lesson and with other students and members of staff. This was a significant part of learning where cognitive ability was developed. The use of tattoos to convey different Christian symbols was a creative approach to engage students and develop discussion. The significance of concentrating on symbols was useful and allowed students to identify the use of religious and non religious symbols in everyday life.

The impact was that students were encouraged to explore their own ideas of Christian deity and the importance of symbols. All students were interested and were able to express their personal beliefs.

Teachers were nervous about studying Christianity because of the student's reactions. Some students were at first reluctant to think about Christianity, dismissing it as 'boring.' After listening to Christian beliefs students were keen to offer their beliefs and opinions, even if they did not agree with the views they listened to. By starting where the students were at and planning a creative and innovative approach to studying Christianity, students were beginning conversations with 'well I didn't know Jesus could look so different.' The lead teacher was bowled over by the impact this topic has had.

Springhead School are keen to welcome visitors to the school and especially to the Learning Zone, that supports the development of cognition and learning.

Quality of leadership and management in religious education

The established provision of subject leader network meetings for secondary schools continued last year with one meeting. The attendance was unusually low and therefore disappointing. Subject leaders sent apologies citing difficulties in getting out of school due to financial constraints on cover in many secondary schools. However, the professional development value was highlighted by outstanding evaluation returns from those who attended. A small core of highly committed subject leaders has continued to meet together and keep in touch, in order to keep up to date and share good practice. The subject leader meeting agenda included:

- Updates on local and national issues and developments
- RE and the 2009 Ofsted inspection framework
- Subject self-evaluation
- Sharing good practice

The local authority continues to support the leadership and management of RE, and thus teaching and learning in all schools through facilitating the subject leader networks. These are provided free to all schools in the SLA. The local authority also employs two Humanities Education Development Advisers at a time when other authorities are cutting back support. There are also three Advanced Skills Teachers to support and develop work in schools, providing advice, support and training at no cost.

RE subject leadership in many primary schools, particularly the smaller primary schools, is carried out by a teacher or headteacher with other leadership and management responsibilities for other subjects as well. In some schools where this happens this can give the subject a high profile and this is associated with successful outcomes. In others RE can slip out of focus.

Subject leaders in many secondary schools continue to face an increasing challenge in securing the place of RE within the curriculum. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate has put pressure on optional subjects with the inclusion of Modern Foreign Languages and History/Geography, but not RE. The time allocations for RE are putting pressure on teachers to cover too much in too little time. Student uptake of / or success in the full course may suffer in some secondary schools as a result of these changes. SACRE has made a representation to the DFE as part of the consultation process on the English Baccalaureate, arguing the case for the inclusion of RE.

Effectiveness of the North Yorkshire agreed syllabus

The North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus was written shortly before the Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education was published. However, account was taken of the key issues in the framework relating to the breadth of study and the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus includes the national 8-level assessment scale.

This is the seventh year of the life of the Agreed Syllabus and steps have now been taken to begin the establishment of a conference to undertake the statutory review. This was delayed upon receiving advice issued in December 2008 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority indicating the benefits of waiting for the publication of the new primary national curriculum and new RE guidance. As the timescales for these have now changed it was agreed that SACRE should not delay a statutory review any longer. It is hoped the review will be completed by the end of 2012.

The North Yorkshire RE planning units for key stages 1 and 2, written to support the Agreed Syllabus, remain in place and continue to be valued and well-used by primary schools across the county. These units have been written to take account of the very large number of mixed age and ability classes across the county, making them a particularly valuable and relevant planning tool. However, the key stage 3 planning units are used more in conjunction with the RE guidelines associated with the new key stage 3 curriculum.

Collective workshop

The revised and updated SACRE guidance on collective worship published in 2007 remains in place in schools. A number of schools have indicated how useful they have found this and SACRE. continue to keep it under review.

In some schools collective worship is linked to the RE curriculum, and in many schools members of different faith groups, preserving the statutory requirement for a predominantly Christian character, have been involved. Links between collective worship and social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are well-established in many schools, but care needs to be taken on occasions where “celebration”, “sharing” and/or “golden” assemblies are mistakenly regarded as acts of collective worship.



³ QCA advice on the timing of agreed syllabus revisions in 2009-2010. Non-statutory guidance for local authorities, SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences (December 2008).

Management of the SACRE and partnership with the local authority

SACRE. meetings

The SACRE. maintained its normal annual pattern of three meetings during the school year 2010/11. All meetings have been held at county hall and professionally clerked by a member of the local authority's committee services team, for which members and advisers are grateful.

The majority of members of the SACRE. in place for the full year attended at least two of the three meetings held during the year.

Membership and training

Mr Nasr Emam was re-elected chair of SACRE. for the school year 2010/11 and Mrs Margaret Gibson as vice-chair.

The six major world faiths are represented on the North Yorkshire SACRE., within which there are currently vacancies for a representative for each of the Salvationists, Sikhs and the Society of Friends. Arrangements are in hand to secure nominations to fill these vacancies as soon as possible.

Mr Roger Marks attended the national SACRE. conference.

Improvement and development planning

During the course of the year the SACRE. has considered a number of key issues, including:

- The English Bacclaureate;
- "The Importance of Teaching": White Paper;
- The use of the North Yorkshire VLE (Fronter) to support RE teaching;
- How Global Learning supports RE learning in North Yorkshire schools;
- Ofsted RE subject inspections.

Information and advice

The SACRE. continues to employ the wide range of knowledge, skills and experience represented in its membership to provide information, advice, support and wise counsel to the local authority and its schools on matters relating to RE, collective worship and the wider agenda of inclusion, diversity and community cohesion, for which the local authority is grateful.

In turn, professional advice has been provided to the SACRE. by the local authority through the senior adviser for humanities (now retired) and more recently the humanities education development advisers, supported by other colleagues, and the advanced skills teachers in RE, as appropriate.

Membership of the North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education 2010-2011

Baptist	Mrs G Sellers
Buddhist	Mrs C Taylor
Hindu	Ms K Bali JP
Jewish	Dr N Packter
Methodist	Mrs B Belsham
Muslim	Mr N M Emam (Chair)
Roman Catholic	Mr C Devanny
Salvationist	Vacancy
Sikh	Vacancy
Society of Friends	Vacancy
Church of England (Ripon and Leeds Diocese) (York Diocese)	Mr R Marks Miss M Haigh MBE Rev R Davill
Teachers	Mrs M Gibson (Vice-chair) Mrs S Grey Mrs A Head
Local authority	County Councillor D Blades County Councillor J Clark County Councillor Mrs P English County Councillor R Heseltine County Councillor J Savage
Co-opted	Dr M Hayward (until July 2011) Professor J Adams
Local authority Advisers	Mr M Holyoak (until August 2011) Ms R Mason (from Sept 2011) Ms G Miller (from Sept 2011)

Contact us

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