

Executive Summary

The Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) reports analysed during this reporting period show how SACRE's and local authorities have continued to develop ways of supporting schools and raising standards in religious education and collective worship in Wales.

The vast majority of SACRE's demonstrate secure arrangements for advising their local authorities on supporting and implementing their locally agreed syllabuses in line with the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*.

These agreed syllabuses are becoming firmly established in schools with valuable support being provided by local authorities in the form of teaching materials, in-service training (INSET) courses and by their advisory services.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) recommends that **SACRE's continue to provide effective advice to their local authorities on matters related to raising standards in teaching and learning** as identified in the agreed syllabuses. **All SACRE's should continue to support schools and monitor and evaluate the success of the advice given.** From 2013–14 **specialist subject support should continue to be offered by each consortium** to ensure that standards are maintained. SACRE's should also **continue to advise their consortium about religious education support needed.**

Seventeen SACRE's provided statistical information relating to the public examination results of schools within their local authority. All the SACRE's that presented examination results indicated that they had considered and discussed these results in their meetings. Most compared their local authority results with the all-Wales figures.

Five SACRE's provided separate figures for boys and girls. Where gender differences were noted as significant the SACRE's focused on implementing supportive strategies.

Nineteen SACRE's listed support in the form of teaching resources that had been distributed to schools and some LA's monitor access to online materials, but little mention was made of procedures in place to evaluate their effectiveness.

In six of the SACRE's, it was noted that training was unavailable for one or more of the years covered by this review.

DfES recommends that SACRE's continue to provide advice about teaching methods, resources and teacher training to their local authority. SACRE's should ensure that **an evaluation procedure is in place to assess the impact of that advice on standards.**

Guidance for collective worship was recommended to schools by 17 SACRE's. Seven SACRE's provided INSET courses on the subject of collective worship. Four SACRE's stated that the services of their local authority adviser were available to schools.

Collective worship was evaluated by means of inspection reports and visits of SACRE members to schools to observe acts of worship. Some SACRE's reported that the analysis of inspection reports showed that a very few, mainly secondary, schools needed further guidance in order to comply with the statutory requirements regarding collective worship. Support was offered to these schools to address the situation.

DfES recommends that SACRE's continue to advise their local authorities on supporting and evaluating effective collective worship to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. All SACRE's should continue to address these issues on a regular basis.

There is much evidence of good practice in the work of SACRE's and in the advice that they give to local authorities to promote standards in religious education and collective worship. The SACRE reports provide a means of sharing good practice, informing teachers about innovations and issues in religious education and evaluating success. In addition, Wales Association of SACRE's (WASACRE) acts as a forum for dissemination of ideas, debating important issues and supporting the work of SACRE's in Wales.

DfES acknowledges the quality of work that is carried out by SACRE's and WASACRE in supporting and raising standards in religious education and appreciates the close working relationship it shares with them.

The locally agreed syllabus

Each local authority must adopt a locally agreed syllabus for religious education for all community schools, foundation schools and voluntary schools without a religious character, and review it every five years. (Those schools with a religious character are required to provide religious education and collective worship in accordance with their trust deed, or the tenets of the faith or denomination unless special provisions have been requested under paragraphs 3 and 4, Section 2 – schedule 19 of the School, Standards and Framework Act 1998). SACRE's advise local authorities on this matter and an agreed syllabus conference is convened to make recommendations, and to submit revised syllabuses for approval and adoption.

DfES welcomes the work undertaken by local authorities to review their locally agreed syllabuses and subsequently to adopt or adapt the *National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*. There is also evidence during this period of local authorities supporting schools to implement

changes through advisors' personal contact and SACRE communication by letter. **All SACRE's are now invited to consider ways in which they might best support and monitor schools when continuing to implement their revised agreed syllabuses and how they will evaluate the success of that support.**

Standards in religious education

SACRE's work with their local authorities to monitor and improve standards in religious education in schools. This is carried out by analysing school inspection reports, self-evaluation reports, examination results and results of end of key stage assessments, as well as by making school visits and conducting surveys.

DfES welcomes the work that SACRE's carry out in monitoring standards and compliance issues. With changes that have occurred in inspection procedures, **all SACRE's are invited to advise local authorities on adopting effective ways of monitoring and supporting schools in implementing quality religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales. Self-evaluation procedures having become more important, all SACRE's are invited to follow the current practice of many in evaluating these on an annual basis**, contacting schools to offer support and/or request that learners are provided with their statutory religious education entitlement.

Examination analysis

SACRE's provide statistical information about their schools' performances in public examinations in order to demonstrate standards in religious studies/statutory religious education.

DfES welcomes the SACRE's' analysis and discussion of examination results. This is particularly helpful when results are compared with all-Wales figures, results from previous years, entry pattern and gender issues.

While recognising the complexity of analysis of statistical evidence, certain trends can identify issues that can be resolved through INSET for non-specialist teachers, targeted provision for boys, advice from advisers, etc. as described in a number of SACRE reports.

DfES recommends that all analysis of examination results leads to purposeful discussion and, where appropriate, focused action and subsequent monitoring in order to support schools and share good practice with the aim of raising standards.

Methods of teaching and classroom materials

SACRE's report on and give advice to their local authorities concerning methods of teaching, choice of resources and teacher training.

DfES welcomes the varied support provided by local authorities, including the work of school supportive reviews, INSET meetings and sharing forums. Teachers have been encouraged to familiarise themselves with new resources. **DfES recommends that this evidence of good practice continues and develops, and that further measures are taken to monitor, evaluate and improve provision in order to sustain high standards.**

Collective Worship

SACRE's must monitor and advise on the provision schools make for collective worship. The reports should note any advice given to the local authority in the form of guidance documents, adviser input, recommended resources and INSET. SACRE's should report on the effectiveness of the advice, and work alongside their local authorities to support the implementation of quality collective worship

DfES welcomes the strategies that have been implemented to monitor the provision of collective worship, to ensure compliance and to support good practice through INSET, analysis of inspection reports and school visits by SACRE members.

DfES recommends that SACRE's continue to provide positive advice to their local authorities and that they continue to foster links with schools through school visits by SACRE members and effective monitoring and guidance.

Annex

- agreed syllabus training
- standards achieved by schools pre September 2010
- summary of examination statistics
- resource lists
- INSET provision
- support for collective worship
- training and advice for SACRE members.