

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

The majority of SACREs 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 education (INSET) courses and their advisory services.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) recommends that SACREs 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 SACREs should continue to support schools and monitor and evaluate the success of the advice given.

All 22 SACREs provide statistical analysis of their schools' inspection reports. Eleven of the SACREs noted ways in which schools receiving a Grade 3 (good features that outweigh the shortcomings) or below in religious education (RE) were supported in devising post-inspection action plans. Five SACREs had schools that received a Grade 4 (some good features but shortcomings in important areas). No schools received a Grade 5.

To supplement the inspection framework of the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools (Estyn), five SACREs reported implementing additional measures to evaluate standards in religious education. These included a programme of supportive review visits and use of schools' self-evaluation reports.

DfES recommends that SACREs continue to advise local authorities on monitoring standards and supporting schools pre-and post-inspection. SACREs should also develop and recommend additional and complementary forms of monitoring. This would ensure that schools are continuing to improve standards of teaching and learning in religious education.

Twenty SACREs provided statistical information relating to the public examination results of schools within their local authority. With one exception, all the SACREs 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.

Twelve SACREs provided separate figures for boys and girls. Where gender differences were noted as significant the SACREs focused on implementing supportive strategies.

DfES recommends that SACREs provide evidence of discussions that emerge as a result of analysis of examination results. SACREs should also provide evidence of the subsequent advice that is given to the local authority and action that is then taken to help schools address a range of issues and raise standards.

Twenty SACREs listed support in the form of teaching resources that had been distributed to schools, although no mention was made of procedures in place to evaluate their effectiveness.

In five of the SACREs, it was noted that training was unavailable for one or more of the years covered by this review.

DfES recommends that SACREs continue to provide advice about teaching methods, resources and teacher training to their local authority. SACREs 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 nine SACREs. Fourteen SACREs provided INSET courses on the subject of collective worship. Two SACREs 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 SACREs reported that the analysis of inspection reports showed that some 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 SACREs continue to advise their local authorities on supporting and evaluating effective collective worship to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. All SACREs should continue to address these issues on a regular basis.

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

DfES acknowledges the quality of work that is carried out by SACREs and WASACRE in supporting and raising standards in RE and appreciates the close working relationship it shares with them.