



6th ANNUAL Meeting of the London and SE SACREs

November 6th 2012- 9.45am-3.45pm

Excellent RE

***At the Zartoshty Brothers Hall, Zoroastrian Centre,
440 Alexandra Avenue, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 9TL***

Conference Report

The event was held at the Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow and delegates were made welcome and shown around the centre. They were given an informative talk about the beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism, by Malcolm Deboo, President of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, who also shared some very interesting resources with delegates. The Community were thanked for their generous hospitality and support in making the conference run so smoothly.

At the start of the day, delegates divided into small discussion groups and were encouraged to reflect on successes, challenges and issues. These were then fed back to Bruce Gill and Denise Chaplin to be fed into the day as questions if appropriate or to take back to the NASACRE executive to inform their work and the roll- out of a national initiative to encourage regional groups to meet in other parts to the country.

Among the issues raised (listed at the end of this report in Appendix A) delegates were concerned with issues of non-compliance of schools in providing RE, the rise of the Academies and free schools and the impact that current educational changes to schools and education are having on the state of RE in general.

Report by John Keast on the work of the RE Council.

(John's powerpoint presentation is published on the NASACRE website)

John explained the make up and role of the RE Council (REC). It is an umbrella organisation, with membership made up of representatives from all the major faith and non-faith groups, RE professional bodies and other national voluntary bodies. They have 2 meetings a year and currently have 59 member groups. The aim of the RE council is to present a coherent national voice, working through a number of partnership organisations.

John presented the conference with some key facts about the state of RE:

- RE is no longer required by statute to be taught in academies or Free schools, although it may be required as part of their funding agreement with the government.
- Academies are no longer required by law to teach the local agreed syllabus. Whilst most academies have RE and CW included in their funding agreements – this can be changed by any secretary of state for Education in the future!
- There is no QC(D)A and therefore no national advisor, also no detailed analysis of data or SACRE reports.
- There has been a reduction of the targets for RE PGCE students. With fewer RE teachers being trained than ever before the result will be that some teacher training institutions, with only a handful of students, are likely to close their RE department.
- The removal of exemplars, levels and programmes of study, in line with other subjects.
- RE has been excluded from the government's curriculum review.
- The move away from GCSE in favour of the EBacc will leave the subject in limbo.

- The DfE has abolished bursaries for RE students (along with drama, citizenship and D.T.)
- There has been a leaked report to the effect that a 16+ Abacc may be introduced (replacing A levels), and this is likely not to include RE (in line with Ebacc policy)
- Fewer take up with short course GCSE in RE (due to non inclusion in end of year 11 stats)
- GCSE RE long course numbers are growing, but it is anticipated that this is unlikely to remain so.

The facts lead to John's simple first conclusion that RE is being dismantled of all national support structures, rendering RE totally a 'local matter'. So taking on board a consideration the significance of local developments:

- the loss of the RE subject paragraphs in OFSTED reports, so less information getting through to SACREs
- the loss of many RE advisor posts nationally
- diminishing or no budget for local SACREs
- disappearance / reduction of local professional development provision
- most secondary schools are now outside the remit of the LA and SACRE.

John's somewhat depressing conclusion was to suggest that there is also an increasing collapse of local support and structures for RE. He went on to suggest that there is a wholesale change in the way the government wants RE to be perceived. The intention, it seems, is to leave it up to local schools to determine their own response the requirement (whatever that is) to teach RE. Whilst the government still continue to assert that RE is statutory, clearly this is not the whole picture. John asked what might be the role of the faith communities in this situation?

The key consequences:

- fragmentation of the RE curriculum
- fewer trained RE teachers
- reduction in provision and quality of RE teaching

His fear is that the end of RE as we know it could be in sight! So therefore the question comes to mind: why do we bother and continue to struggle? His response is to suggest that the REC will continue to propose that good RE is important to the development of society. He believes that the RE council, local SACREs and other key stakeholders need to take responsibility for the subject.

The REC produced a strategic plan a few months ago with 5 key areas of work, each one driven by a committee or working group:

1. CAQ (curriculum assessment and qualification group) – they have set up their own 'expert' panel and they are undertaking their own independent review of RE. This will have an impact, and in the absence of any other guidance will, it is hoped, be seen as a benchmark for future RE developments, not least in its value to local SACREs and ASCs reviewing their agreed syllabus.

(note: John has already published a paper on qualification reform in RE on the REC website?)

2. PD (professional development group) –
 - setting up a PD portal on the REC website
 - continue to build on the Resilience project
 - continue to develop the 'sacred spaces' initiative
 - roll out the RE quality mark (see later item)

3. PR (public relations group) – the work of this group includes meeting with ministers (schools minister met with REC earlier this year but was lost to a reshuffle so need to meet with 'new' schools minister Mrs Elizabeth Truss). Also letters to local ministers and other political parties in parliament. However, John noted that he is disappointed at the lack of response from government ministers (including the secretary of state for education) to any letters sent. He added that most MPs do not respond effectively to questions about RE and this gives the impression that most would appear ignorant of what is happening with RE. All this underpins the importance of the EDM (Early Day Motion) that was tabled by Stephen Lloyd MP (conservative) which has now helped the formation of the APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) on the topic of RE. This group is currently enquiring into how teacher supply and local support will impact RE.

The REC is setting in motion a ReThinkRE campaign for 2013 and they are also trying to link up with head teachers, governors and academy trusts.

4. Resources
 - Invite key people to become patrons of REC
 - Develop their supporters base
 - Build on the young ambassadors schemes
 - Fund raising!
5. Governance
 - Expanded membership
 - More individual members
 - Working together smarter!

Questions put to John Keast:

1. Question about what might be the role of the REC in networking religious groups? John felt it was important to encourage faith groups to work together and speak with a single voice.
2. Question regarding extremist views in admission policies of academies? John felt that with the increased fragmentation of RE, the RE curriculum might descend into merely a list of topics or faiths we don't want to see. However, he added that whilst there are extremist opinions (the questioner mentioned extreme secularist opinions) the BHA is supportive of good RE and are part of the REC coalition.
3. One questioner asked if John felt this is all being driven by the Secretary of State for Education. John graciously suggested that Michael Gove has great energy but is dogmatic in his particular approach to education. He has a lot of support and is in a powerful position. However, he has created the impression that current changes in education are a huge experiment in two key areas: school autonomy and developing a core knowledge based curriculum. One key is that the Ebacc will become the dominant factor (common destination for students) and will determine everything else regarding school curriculum.
4. Another questioner expressed the concern that in a 'privatised' or commercial education system, is it not the case that he who pays the piper .. ? John replied that if RE is not being assessed (or validated?) it will not be taught. In other words, if schools are no longer judged on the quality or content of their RE .. they will drop it to focus on those area of the curriculum that is.

In conclusion, as we see the decline in the take up of short course GCSE in RE, and the projected drop in numbers for the long course RE, John suggested that the decline of RE in schools will lead to a growing lack in Religious Literacy within all levels of society. A closing

anecdote was his worry that someone who is religiously illiterate will never understand the need for religious literacy in the first place!

Presentation by Mary Myatt on the Religious Education Quality Mark

(Mary's power point presentation and other notes are also on the NASACRE website)

The aim of this project is to recognise outstanding teaching and learning in religious education. It is an accreditation system which seeks to recognise good practice in RE, and designed to be a mechanism for whole school improvement beyond RE as its principle focus is to enhance pedagogy (see additional notes below).

The REQM is currently available to all schools, academies and it includes faith based schools too and additional information can be gathered from their website www.reqm.org. The purpose of the REQM is to provide a framework that will encourage schools increase their range and quality of planning, teaching and learning in Religious Education, and, by improving the standard of pedagogy in RE, aim to impact whole school improvement.

Mary suggested that where there is little or no RE in a school, it is difficult to capture the role and impact of RE on SMSC (Social Moral Spiritual and Cultural development of each child or student).

The way the REQM will benefit each school will be in:

- the dissemination of good quality RE through networking.
- maintain the position of RE as schools move forward towards a more creative curriculum.
- Assess the findings of Transforming RE initiative (reported 2012), especially relating to enquiry based RE teaching.

The REQM assesses 5 criteria:

- Learners and learning
- Teachers and teaching
- Curriculum
- Subject leadership
- Continuing professional development.

Report by Bruce Gill on the work of NASACRE, including regional updates

Bruce looked at the post-its from the first session, giving those present a flavour of the successes and concerns.

He circulated an information sheet based on the outcomes of the evaluations from the NASACRE AGM and the responses of SACREs to a survey undertaken by NASACRE in the summer term 2012. (Appendix 2)

Bruce emphasised that NASACRE tries to respond to national initiatives representing the interests of SACREs. This is an enormous task and regional conferences provide an opportunity for NASACRE to be in touch with the concerns and views of SACREs. NASACRE Executive members are all volunteers.

Bruce shared with colleagues NASACRE and AREIAC's joint statement on Circular 1/94 and collective worship (October 2012).

He explained that since March of this year NASACRE and the Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants (AREIAC) have jointly been in contact with the Department for Education regarding the status of Circular 1/94 with respect to what this Circular says about

collective worship. In the course of this correspondence it was made clear that 1/94 has no legal or semi legal status, nor does the Circular have a quasi-legal status. It does not represent the Government's official advice on collective worship which schools are in some sense obliged to follow. Officials state that in this area local determination is a key strength and for this reason all schools and Academies can choose whether or not to use Circular 1/94

Further information in Appendix C

Appendix A

Outcomes from 'Post it' Group Discussions

Positives

Schools are turning to SACRE for advice
County Council involvement in *Youth Voice* with two part time advisers (one LA)
SACRE youth voice (another LA)
SACRE syllabus review brings religions together
Use of faith representatives to assist with syllabus delivery
SMSC being reported by Ofsted
Welcome days – visits coordinated
Multifaith Centre in Lewisham being supported by faith communities and schools
Inclusion of humanists and pagans
Reflecting the make up of the area
A good sane clerk
Completing our Code of Conduct and Constitution has triggered a review of membership

Challenging Issues

Making RE accessible to all
Quoracy of groups and committees
Quality of SACRE clerks
Funding
Lack of teachers
Sharing staff
Academies and Free Schools
EBacc
LA funding of advisers to SACRE
Lack of training for teachers
Teacher volunteers
Lack of purposefulness
Non-compliance
Monitoring acts of collective worship
Status of SACREs in local authorities
Disconnect between SACREs and schools – no budget for more
Block teaching versus single lessons in primary schools
Useful to have advisory teachers in all authorities but funding is an issue.
Assessment of RE and CW and lack of teeth and few Ofsted inspections.
Difficulty adapting some LA Syllabuses for SEN
Connecting with schools to support teaching of RE
Getting pupils involved regardless of teacher and their skills.

Some questions:

Initial Teacher Training – What is it now?
Is SACRE organised training the way forward?
Syllabus implementation – How do we do it?
Should SACRE members be going into schools?
What is the role of RE in the new curriculum?
What structure for Annual SACRE reports and who is it for?
The support that RE gets from SACRE – what is it and how?

How will the communications between schools and RE and SACRE operate?
How are SACREs supporting academies?

Appendix B

NASACRE UPDATES June to October 2012

Feedback from SACRES at the AGM

My SACRE looks to NASACRE for:

Consultation

Representation at policy/ national level (with REC); Guidance/representation? Of policy developments; collective solidarity.

A possible model/draft syllabus to be used by small SACRES.

Advice, support, recommended articles, books for resources.

Up to date info about legislation and its impact upon RE e.g. National Curriculum Review. Academies.

Keeping SACRES informed of national picture and developments and of ways they can support. Less about research and more about HOW SACRES might support schools in (this) financially challenging climate. Examples of good practice.

Other comments:

NASACRE needs to emphasise that the real authority re RE lies with local authorities and their SACRES. As a consequence we expect more consultation with local SACRES prior to making representations with the Government, DfE or the REC (which claims to speak for the RE community).

Sharing what different SACRES do and who they? to – perhaps on NASACRE website. This would allow development of SACRES and development of good practice and experience. My own SACRE believes SACRE should be more proactive rather than reactive to Government initiatives. Developing a package for parents on what RE is. Any follow up to the work of the other year on Inter Faith Dialogue?

Rather concerned that the paper on CW is available for all and many people will not know all the difficulties with Circular 1/94. Until this paper has been agreed by NASACRE and AREIAC it should not be in the front page of the website. Many may not read it as a consultative paper. It could backfire and feed into those who are so anti CW as evidence to use fighting a change in the law.

SACRE Survey 2012 (selected sections)

This builds on the surveys of 2010 and 2011. The 2011 SACRE survey received 47 responses (30%) from SACRES. By mid-August the 2012 survey had received 69 responses and by early September this had increased to 71(46%).

Three responses did not identify the SACRE.

Of those SACRES responding, significant proportions reported that they still had:

- Specialist advisers and consultants – 84%
- RE Advisors/Consultants who were LA officers with knowledge of and access to local schools -72%
- LA clerks – 97%

5. How many days of support is your SACRE receiving? 57 answers

1-5	16	(28%)
6-10	8	(14%)
10-15	9	(16)
16-20	7	(12%)

20-30	2	(4%)
.>30	15	(26%)

7. What budget is the LA providing for the SACRE in this financial year (2012/13)? 53 answers

None	4	(8%)
£1,000 or less	4	(8%)
£1,001 - £3,000	5	(9%)
£3,001-£5,000	10	(19%)
£5,001-£10,000	11	(21%)
£10,001-£15,000	14	(26%)
£15,001-£20,000	5	(9%)
>£20,000	9	(13%)

8. When will you next review your Agreed Syllabus? 57 answers

Currently doing so	15	(26%)
2013 -14	11	(19%)
2014-15	5	(9%)
2016-17	14	(25%)

9. To your knowledge, will the support you are receiving this year continue into 2013-13? 53 answers

Yes we have assumed continuation at this level	23	(43%)
Yes, but likely to be reduced	14	(26%)
Yes	42	(72%)
No	16	(28%)
Yes	42	(72%)
No	16	(28%)
No	2	(4%)
Uncertain	15	(28%)
Other	12	(22%)

10. Greatest concerns of your SACRE for the new academic year (September 2012 to July 2013)? 52 answers.

The stated concerns were:

- Continued **Support** for SACREs (27)
- The place of **RE in the curriculum (23)**
- Access to **academies (16)**
- **Monitoring of RE** in all schools (including academies) (11)
- Future **role of SACRE (12)**
- Review of **Agreed Syllabus (10)**
- Supporting schools (**monitoring provision for and standards in RE**) (9)
- Meaningful access for pupils to **non-Christian religious traditions.** (8)
- The **profile of the SACRE in the LA (8)**
- **Professional development** for teacher and RE leaders (3)
- Supporting schools on **collective worship (4)**
- **Teaching of RE** by non-specialists (2)

These are helping to shape and guide NASACRE priorities for the period 2013-2016.

Annual Reports - Send to NASACRE – note that many SACREs are also sending copies to the SoS (50 received to date, a number of SACREs running behind their own schedules because of local pressures.

ASCs – Minimalist approach maintained.

InterFaith Week -IFN Briefing

RE Subject Review – timetable and consultation points.

Appendix C NASACRE and AREIAC's joint statement on Circular 1/94 and collective worship

October 2012

Since March of this year NASACRE and AREIAC have been in contact with the Department for Education regarding the status of Circular 1/94 with respect to what this Circular says about collective worship. In the course of this correspondence it has been made clear that 1/94 has no legal or semi legal status, nor does the Circular have a quasi-legal status. It does not represent the Government's official advice on collective worship which schools are in some sense obliged to follow. Officials state that in this area local determination is a key strength and for this reason all schools and Academies can choose whether or not to use the Circular

The view of NASACRE and AREIAC is that collective worship can and should be an inclusive experience which, when done well, can make a valuable and highly positive contribution to life in general in all schools. All schools and Academies should be meeting the legal requirements for collective worship. However, we are aware that in attempting to do so many institutions experience difficulties which stem from statements which appear in Circular 1/94. The Circular is thus often a barrier to good collective worship. For this reason NASACRE and AREIAC advise that schools and Academies should not use Circular 1/94 but that their provision for collective worship should be guided by the legal requirements as set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and confirmed in the 1996 Education Act. NASACRE has provided a guide to Collective Worship for schools which is available on the website, highlighting good practice.