

# Central Bedfordshire SACRE Annual Report 2011

## Message from the Chair

It is a pleasure to introduce the annual report of the Central Bedfordshire SACRE for 2010-2011.

The aim of this report is to update readers about the work of the members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Our function is to advise the LA on matters relating to collective worship in community schools and on religious education given in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. The SACRE monitors the effectiveness and appropriateness of the agreed syllabus, which is formally reviewed every five years. This process took place in 2010-11 when SACRE and the teacher working group worked with the professional body RE Today and neighbouring LAs to update the agreed syllabus. The new syllabus will be launched in November 2011 for implementation in September 2012.

This year we have continued to receive support from Steve Morrow, as part of his consultancy and advisory role in the LA and we have worked in partnership with The RE Society of Bedfordshire, St. Albans Diocese, RE Today and the Professional Study Group to offer training and advice to schools.

In January, SACRE held the fifth public commemoration of the Holocaust alongside a remembrance of all victims of genocide, racism, and persecution across the world. This was held in partnership with Bedford SACRE at Biddenham International School and was attended by many students, elected members, SACRE members and teachers. Thanks to grants from Bedford Borough Council and St. Albans Diocese and supported by the Bedfordshire RE Society and Bedford and Central Bedfordshire SACREs, an exhibition entitled 'Surviving History' was also held and secondary schools and teachers were invited to visit during the week of Holocaust Memorial Day.

***Surviving History: Portraits from Vilna*** presented the life stories of ten individuals who survived the Holocaust in Lithuania where 95% of the 240,000-strong pre-war Jewish population was annihilated. The routes of escape were narrow. Those who survived did so because they joined the partisans or the army; escaped to Russia; kind strangers hid them in basements and attics and on farms; others slipped unnoticed through a hole in the ghetto gate, or some lasted in the camps until liberation. All of those interviewed lost family members to the Holocaust.

We are grateful to Biddenham International School who coordinated the event, providing exhibition guides, musicians and a very warm welcome.

Members of SACRE bring much expertise and a spirit of thoughtful co-operation to meetings. The Council brings together councillors, teachers and faith representatives. The commitment of the members of SACRE to promoting religious education in Central Bedfordshire is strong and evident in their active interest, involvement in developmental work and in monitoring the quality of religious education in the Borough's schools.

SACRE receives much positive information about the quality of RE and its impact on pupils' personal development. Some reports reveal outstanding and innovative work in schools. We acknowledge the hard work of RE subject leaders and teachers. The importance of high quality religious education cannot be overstressed. Our teachers make a vital contribution to the promotion of social cohesion in our multi-faith society.

There have been some membership changes to Central Bedfordshire SACRE this year; we have welcomed new members and thanked those who have come to the end of their term.

I am pleased to commend this report to you.  
Jane Chipperton - Chair, SACRE (2010-11)

### Membership of SACRE

Group A Christian and other religious denominations	Representing
Sister Aiden Richards	Roman Catholic
Mary O'Sullivan	Roman Catholic
Marion Roberts	Free Church
Nina Leigh	Jewish
Mohsin Malik	Muslim
Ven. Akurala Samitha	Buddhist
Tirath Bhavra	Sikh
Group B Church of England	
Jane Chipperton	Church of England
Rev. Anne Crawford	Church of England
Tom Waterworth	Church of England
Group C Teachers' Association	
Chris Spurgeon	Headteacher
Kathleen Eldridge	Upper Schools
Jacque Binks	Middle Schools
Linda Hardy	Lower Schools
Janet Day	Special Schools
Group D Elected Members	
Cllr Angela Barker	Local Authority
Cllr David Jones	Local Authority
Cllr David Lawrence	Local Authority
Cllr Mrs Doreen B Gurney	Local Authority
Cllr Charles Gomm	Local Authority
Cllr Mark Versallion	Local Authority
Officers to SACRE	
Helen Bell	Committee Services Officer
Steve Morrow	School Improvement Adviser

## **Standards in Religious Education**

The GCSE, both Full and Short Courses, in religious education remains the principle way in which the achievement of 14-16 year olds is recognised.

### **GCSE Full Course**

- Students were entered for the Full course in RE in seven of the ten Central Bedfordshire upper schools, including Academies.
- Of the 1976 students entered, 62% gained grades A\* to C. This compares with last year's figures, with 1133 pupils entered, of which 51% gaining grades A\* to C.
- The National figures for A\* to C in Religious Education is 52%, making Central Bedfordshire above national figures.
- Of the students entered for the Full course, 97% achieved a grade A to G

### **GCSE Short Course:**

- In Central Bedfordshire, 329 students took the short course across seven of the nine reporting upper schools, including Academies.
- 31% of students attained between A\* to C, compared with 62% last year.
- Of the students entered for the full course, 89% achieved a grade A to G.

### **A Level (AS)**

- In Central Bedfordshire, 138 students took AS across seven of the ten reporting upper schools including Academies.
- 49% of students attained between A\* to C.

### **A Level (A2)**

- In Central Bedfordshire, 60 students took A2 across seven of the ten reporting upper schools including Academies.
- 49% of students attained between A\* to C.

## **Ofsted Visits**

There have been 40 schools inspected since the last SACRE annual report, 1 Nursery, 19 Lower, 9 Middle and 1 Special School. There have also been 10 Interim Assessments by Ofsted of 8 Lower and 2 Middle.

### **Of the 19 Lower:**

For Overall Effectiveness - 4 were Outstanding, 10 were Good and 5 were Satisfactory

For Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural - 3 were Outstanding, 14 were Good and 2 were satisfactory.

### **Of the 9 Middle:**

For Overall Effectiveness - 3 were Good, 5 were Satisfactory and 1 was Notice to Improve

For Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural - 7 were Good and 2 were satisfactory.

Both the Nursery and the Special School were Outstanding for both Overall Effectiveness and Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural

The LA was also a pilot school for the new Ofsted Framework due to be introduced in January 2012. The new framework does not have a separate judgement for Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural

4 Lower schools were inspected, with 1 Outstanding and 3 Good grades overall.

### **NASACRE AGM**

Dr Robert Beckford delivered the keynote address at the AGM this year. The title of his address was: **Engaging young people in the big society.**

Dr Beckford started with a quote: 'Faith without engagement is faith without works' and then confessed to not being an 'expert' on this subject area, but said he wanted to address the issue of 'Young People and the Big Society' and he sought to triangulate a response from his various backgrounds.

Dr Beckford's concluding remarks suggested Big Society should be given a chance, since for all its faults, it could have some positive outcomes. Whilst Big Society is not actually a radical policy, it could have a radical effect provided its goals remain realistic, instigating a process of radical transformation and establishing a process that can tackle systemic failures. Finally, it was important to be aware of what drives young people; understanding social media was crucial and being aware of their antipathy towards religion, especially at a time when much media promotes the tabloid view that 'religious' people are assumed to be 'fundamentalist'. There was a clear role for RE to counter these assumptions.

After the AGM Dr. Beckford was invited to speak at the Bedfordshire RE Society AGM in October.

**John Keast, Chair elect of the RE Council** made a speech about the present state of RE. John began by thanking Brian Gates as the outgoing chair of the REC and acknowledging the debt of gratitude owed to him for his work.

John spoke about the future role of the RE Council – it must become as effective an embodiment and representative of the RE community as possible. To this end the 'think tank' had been established. It had made a report to the REC in March suggesting how the REC could be better at what it does. Crucial was the need for a strategic plan for the next five year period. This was an opportunity for all members of the REC to contribute to setting the direction and making real the opportunity the current changes in education were providing. Without a national place, the community had to take responsibility for the subject, to advance the interest of the subject, for its teachers and young people.

John's final point was that to take advantage of the opportunity and remedy the threats we had to work together. Failing to do so would mean the threats would weaken us in ways that would undermine the profession and the subject for more than a decade to come.

**Clare Dempsey, Year 11 pupil at Bishop Challoner School, Birmingham** and RE Celebration prize winner presented a video she had produced to illustrate what RE was like in her classroom and in many others. She used this to introduce her title: Why RE is important to society in Britain and beyond. More information about Clare Dempsey could be found at:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLBsqaHIRO&feature=channel\\_video\\_title](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLBsqaHIRO&feature=channel_video_title)

### **Young People's Interfaith Project Presentation:**

Marion McQueen (Blackpool) described a project in which year 6 pupils had been involved in Holocaust Memorial Day. The project resulted in a DVD of the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) presentation by the children from a collection of schools. The impact had been felt in ten schools now committed to teaching this material next year and taking part in HMD.

### **Celebrating RE**

RE was celebrated across Central Bedfordshire throughout the month of March.

Previously in January 2010, our local Celebrating RE champions fed back to the East region group of Celebrating RE champions about our local plans and these were put into practice throughout term two.

Celebrating RE month was launched with a bang thanks to a Bedford Council of Faiths "Faith Fest". Schools of all ranges attended the Faith Fest, allowing learning to take place outside of the classroom so that their students could experience first hand a wide range of different faiths and understand and question what their faith means. This was extremely well received by all the schools involved as they appreciate the expertise and opportunity to apply religion to real life people and situations.

Anecdotal information from school coordinators and subject leaders of RE shows how students enjoyed being part of something bigger and sharing their experiences with others and staff felt proud that their subject could be in the spotlight and focus in school, as this had not been the case for a long time.

A national legacy of pictures and resources was created to reflect this exciting month of celebration. Bedfordshire features in this legacy Celebrating RE book. This can be found at:

<http://flipflashpages.uniflip.com/2/53875/95669/pub/>

### **Advice and Support for Schools**

Many schools use the support and resources provided by Jane Chipperton, Religious Education Adviser for the Diocese of St Albans, who oversees a resource base at St Mark's church Centre, Brickhill. The resource collection and beds-re website ([www.beds-re-resources.org.uk/](http://www.beds-re-resources.org.uk/)), support the multi faith approach of the Agreed Syllabus, which is available throughout the day and in school holidays. SACRE members wish to express their thanks to the Diocese of St Albans, St. Mark's Brickhill and Jane Chipperton for providing this service.

The RE Society for Bedfordshire has been active in publicising courses running in the area, organising visits to places of worship for different faiths and providing after-school workshops for teachers. SACRE receives copies of the RE Society's informative newsletter which the LA sends to all schools.

### **LA Agreed Syllabus**

2010 – 2011 saw the rewriting of our LA Agreed Syllabus alongside Luton and Bedford Borough in order to maximise cost efficiency.

Teachers across all three LA's were sent a questionnaire so that we could change and update our syllabus in accordance to their views and wishes. The areas to focus on from the point of view of the teachers was the need for further support and guidance over levelling and assessment with consistency across level descriptors.

Our teachers worked hard as part of the working party to discuss and support the creation of a syllabus that will benefit all teachers across the three authorities. With RE Today, they produced a 21<sup>st</sup> century syllabus that will not only engage our students but support teachers in showing that RE is a vital and relevant part of education system and passing this practical understanding of religion we can create well rounded students for our society.

Our thanks go to the teachers who took part in the teacher working party as they gave up their time to read and work through materials in preparation for our meetings and gave so much during the sessions.

In conjunction with the work on the LA Agreed Syllabus, we ran a competition for our school children to design artwork for the final document.