

## INTRODUCTION TO ANNUAL REPORT [Draft for Approval]

Our SACRE has continued to do its best in the last year – but with a growing realisation if the SACRE is to be truly effective then something significant needs to change.

The vital importance of high quality RE teaching – and SACREs' involvement in enabling it - is increasingly recognised:

- The report of the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life 'Living with Difference' identified good RE teaching as essential in developing religious literacy and a 'religiously astute' society
- The 'RE for Real' report, whose sponsors included Culham St Gabriel's, a charitable trust dedicated to excellence in RE, addressed the 'policy muddle about RE' and inter alia called for an urgent review of the role of SACREs
- A report by the National Association of Teachers of RE 'The State of the Nation' identifies the many deficiencies and challenges in providing high quality RE teaching in secondary schools in England
- The interim report for the Commission on Religious Education also catalogues the many inadequacies and inconsistencies in providing high quality RE in all schools. It too calls inter alia for an expanded role for SACREs.

There is a new interest too in another SACRE responsibility, collective worship. The statutory provisions for collective worship have been seen in many schools as appropriate for a former age and quietly forgotten. There is a new interest though in inclusive forms of collective worship which draw inspiration from all faiths. This year's winner of the Accord Coalition's award – Brent SACRE – provides one example: 'Rather than watching assemblies wither on the vine, Brent SACRE's approach helps secure for local pupils a valuable opportunity to communally explore and forge shared values, in a way that is respectful and workable'.

The Accord awards highlighted other ways in which SACREs have been innovative: Suffolk SACRE, for instance, provided its schools with a 'Teaching Controversial Issues Toolkit' intended to support teachers with respect to the Prevent programme, the promotion of pupils' SMSC development, and teaching 'British values'. The Toolkit had plans and resources organised around nine themes including extremism, tolerance, being British, and culture and faith.

So these are rapidly-changing times in RE and collective worship - there is clearly plenty of valuable work that our SACRE could be doing. What is becoming obvious though is that SACRE as it is currently operating is not capable of providing the impetus and energy required to make a difference. This will be the subject of consultation: can SACRE meet more regularly? Should it create sub-committees to help widen and accelerate its impact? Should there be some elementary form of secretariat? And can volunteers be found to take on some or all of the work which needs to be done if SACRE is to fulfil its potential? These are some of the questions with which we will be grappling this year.