

NASACRE Conference and AGM Report

23rd May 2022

The theme of the conference was that of “Ambitious SACRE’s” and there were just under 150 participants shown on the Zoom screen as taking part during the day.

The main events of the day were 3 keynote addresses each followed by a breakout group and then the last two sessions were a Question Time and a short Business Meeting.

Keynote 1 was a presentation on behalf of the RE Council (by vice-chair Ed Pawson). The core of the presentation was information about a recently published draft Handbook following up the 2018 CoRE Report on Religion and Worldviews. This Handbook is designed to translate the vision set out in that Report into a practical resource to equip syllabus and curriculum developers.

In the presentation there was no acknowledgement that the Religion and Worldviews approach was at all contentious. However, In the breakout group of which I was a part different views were expressed. In Elizabeth’s group, Sarah Lane Cawte, chair of the REC, stated that the draft handbook “is not perfect, they are trying out ideas” She emphasized that they “invite comment”.

In the Question Time it was also acknowledged that “the language about worldviews is evolving”.

Keynote 2 was from Dr Richard Kueh RE lead at Ofsted. The emphasis of his address was that Ofsted were looking for high quality Religious Education. There was a clear indication that the importance was depth and not breadth. Ofsted have defined three ways of describing knowledge:

1. Substantive knowledge – this is the stuff of concepts and content
2. Ways of knowing
3. Personal knowledge – mainly what the pupils bring to the table

In looking at a curriculum we were told that there were two key factors

- a) Selection of the curriculum – what is selected to be included. Here he spoke of the content needing to be “collectively enough” – as it is impossible to cover everything. He also spoke of the need to help pupils recognise a spectrum of belief and practise among those from different religious and non-religious backgrounds.
- b) Scholarship of the curriculum – he spoke very strongly of the need for high quality study and academic excellence to percolate down to what is provided for pupils to learn and understand. It was a reminder of just how well served Hampshire has been by our Advisers, and others who have been building academic excellence into our local RE over many years.

Keynote 3 – this was a review of Annual Reports submitted by SACRE’s to NASACRE by Dr David Hampshire.

Question Time – the most significant issue raised during Question Time was in relation to the White Paper (Opportunities for all) published in March. The view expressed was that, if implemented as currently proposed, this would lead to a fully trust based system. Consequently, there would no longer be a place for Local Education Authorities and equally no place for SACRE's whose role is to advise LEA's. The implications for the RE world would be very significant and the sense of a "local" Locally Agreed Syllabus which has underpinned RE for over 50 years would be lost. There were many voices raised hoping that changes would be made to the White Paper.