



## Inclusive SACREs Award nomination form



believing in children, learning together

<b>SACRE name:</b>	Monmouthshire
<b>Name and position of main contact for the Award:</b>	Gill Vaisey – RE Consultant to SACRE
<b>Main contact's telephone number and email address:</b>	01594 516490 gill_press@hotmail.com
<b>Name and email of SACRE Chair (if different from above):</b>	Liz Hacket Pain Lizhacketpain@monmouthshire.gov.uk
<b>Name and contact email of RE advisors, clerks or local authority staff/ officers that currently actively support the SACRE:</b>	Gill Vaisey – RE Consultant to SACRE <a href="mailto:Gill_press@hotmail.com">Gill_press@hotmail.com</a>  Sharon Randall-Smith – Head of Achievement and Attainment, Monmouthshire County Council <a href="mailto:Sharonrandallsmith@monmouthshire.gov.uk">Sharonrandallsmith@monmouthshire.gov.uk</a>  Richard Williams – Clerk of SACRE richardwilliams@monmouthshire.gov.uk

### 1. Contact details:

### 2. SACRE details:

Please provide the information listed below by either including a relevant hyperlink or indicating that the document is to be attached by email with this completed form.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Copy of the current syllabus, and any accompanying guidance:</b>	<u>Sent as a separate attachment</u>
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<sup>1</sup> If only a paper copy can be submitted, please post it to the Accord Coalition at Unit A, 39 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB.

Copy of the SACRE constitution, along with any standing orders:	<u>Sent as a separate attachment</u>
Link to SACRE website (if exists):	<u>Newsletter sent</u>
Link to last annual report:	<u>Sent as a separate attachment</u>

Please list the current membership of your committees A, B, C and D, or any members who are co-opted or attend regularly as an observer, and indicate for which party, tradition or interest group(s) they each represent. Feel free to also indicate any known vacancies.

**Committee A:**

Mrs V Howells Mr R Cottrell Revd Dr P Baines Mrs S Cave She-zer Khandro Mr S Sharma Mr A Davidson Mrs N Baicher Mrs F Jilani	Representing the Church in Wales Representing the Roman Catholic Church Representing Free Churches Representing Bahá'í Faith Representing Buddhist Faith Representing Hindu Faith Representing Jewish Faith Representing the Sikh Faith Representing the Muslim Faith
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**Committee B:**

Mr A Jones Mrs R Davies Ms C Cooper Ms S Perry Phillips Ms M Millington Mrs J Thomas Mr S Oram	Representing the Teachers' Associations
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**Committee C:**

Councillor E J Hacket Pain Councillor P. Clarke Councillor A Easson Councillor J George Councillor D Jones Councillor B Strong	Representing Monmouthshire County Council
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<b>Committee D:</b>	
<b>N/A in Wales</b>	
<b>Co-opted:</b>	
<b>Mrs K Fitter</b> <b>Mr T Thomas</b> <b>Carl Hickling (pending approval by the LA)</b> <b>British Humanist Association invitation extended and awaiting their response</b>	<b>HTLA</b> <b>Former RS Head of Dept and WJEC Officer</b> <b>Coleg Gwent Chaplain</b>
<b>Observers:</b>	

### **3. SACRE remit and resources:** (no more than 250 words)

Please describe – in no more than 225 words – the characteristics of the area the SACRE covers and the number of schools that are currently required to adhere to its syllabus. This is also an opportunity to describe the access to subject expertise and the level of material support the SACRE receives, including from the local authority.

<p>Monmouthshire is located in south east wales. It is bordered by England in the east by Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent in the west and Powys in the north-west. The population is 91,508.</p>
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The delegated budget to both primary and secondary school are respectively above the Welsh average.

The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age eligible for free school meals is lower than the Wales average. Schools in Monmouthshire range from 40% free school meals to zero free school meals. The looked after children in the County is in the range 80-110.

Ethnic minorities account for approximately 1% of the County's population which is lower than the Wales average.

Monmouthshire County Council has four secondary schools and a special school and thirty primary schools. Of the primary schools two are Welsh medium, four Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled, two Roman Catholic Aided and two Church in Wales Voluntary Aided. The four secondary schools and twenty-six primary schools are required to adhere to the locally agreed Syllabus.

SACRE receives excellent support from the local authority. Six county councillors sit on the committee, many of whom attend meetings regularly and show a keen interest in the committee's work. The Chair of SACRE is always appointed from the LA group and the current chair of SACRE has been in this position for ten years, and has provided valuable continuity and a strong commitment to the work of the committee.

The committee is also supported by the Head of Achievement and Attainment who advises and supports SACRE on general educational matters linked to the RE issues being considered at meetings. Subject expertise is provided by an external RE Consultant who has supported the SACRE since its inception in 1996. The RE Consultant is funded through the consortium Educational Achievement Service (EAS) and ultimately the local authority.

#### **4. Implementation of being an inclusive SACRE:** (no more than 850 words)

This is the most important section. The judges recognise there are many competing expectations and demands placed upon the subject. However they are especially interested in the way that the SACRE have sought to boost inclusion, community cohesion, mutual understanding and mutual respect between those of different religions and non-religious

worldviews. Please provide specific examples of how these aims are met. It is also recommended to set out at least one innovative approach that has been particularly important or successful. Judges will be interested to find out how the Agreed Syllabus directly advances these aims, but other areas of the SACRE's work that could prove of interest include:

- building a relationship with local schools that are not required to follow the syllabus and forging partnerships with other agencies (such as local academy chains, multi-academy chains and faith school sponsors, or higher or further education providers)
- urging the local authority to ensure that the membership of the SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference is diverse and representative, including of the non-religious
- considering the views of pupils, or developing a Youth SACRE or RE Ambassador programme
- support and guidance to schools on making assemblies and/or provision for SMSC development more inclusive
- creative use of Collective Worship determinations
- the production or commissioning of extra resources for teachers, such as with lesson or curriculum planning (please also submit these in digital copy - they will be treated with confidence and only shared amongst the judging panel)
- organising training for Governors or helping tackle gaps in training and Career Professional Development for teachers
- developing support and research networks
- celebrating successes by pupils and schools
- identifying an area of the SACRE's weakness and acting upon it
- targeted help to individual schools
- ideas and help for schools to advance their legal duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty<sup>2</sup> and requirement to promote British Values and community cohesion

The Award judges are also interested in the provision of high quality RE more generally, so please consider drawing upon examples that highlight how the SACRE has helped in achieving this. Examples might include:

- new ways of working to alleviate the impact of local authority funding restraints
- sharing ideas and concerns with central government
- ensuring continuity, coherence and sustained learning for pupils moving between primary and secondary phases,
- promoting provision for short course or full RS GCSE and A level

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<sup>2</sup> The Public Sector Equality Duty was created by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and came into force in 2011. It requires all public bodies and those carrying out public functions to have due regard when carrying out their activities to helping eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

### **Membership and Inclusion**

Monmouthshire County Council's SACRE has always had inclusion at the heart of its ethos: inclusion in membership and its values as a committee. Everyone is welcome.

The LA has worked effectively to recruit a wide range of faith representation despite the fact that Monmouthshire does not have a diverse range of faiths and cultures within its population (approximately 1% are from ethnic minority backgrounds). Shortly after the appointment of the current chairperson, it was agreed that SACRE would benefit from seeking membership of Committee A beyond the boundaries of its own county in order to enable a wider range of faiths to join its meetings. Since including representation from seven main faith traditions, (Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh), the work of SACRE has become more varied and effective. All members attend meetings regularly and make significant contributions to discussions and outcomes. The faith representation on SACRE is fundamental in all aspects of SACRE and members work together as a united team.

SACRE has recently extended an invitation to the Humanist Association to accept a co-opted place on the committee and a local representative is currently being sought.

SACRE has places for eight teacher association representatives and is fortunate to have dedicated and enthusiastic teachers who regularly attend meeting and make a significant contribution to the work of SACRE.

### **Innovative Faith Representative Led RE Days for Year 6 Pupils**

This diversity of faith SACRE representation has had a major impact on pupils within Monmouthshire schools, particularly through the provision of 'RE Days for Year 6 pupils' which commenced in March 2011 as SACRE's response to the National Celebrating RE initiative. Following the success of the Celebrating RE days in 2011, Monmouthshire SACRE has subsequently regularly arranged an opportunity for Year 6 pupils to participate in an RE Day hosted by each of the four Comprehensive Schools for its respective feeder primary schools.

Working as a team, the RE Consultant organises the programme, liaises with the primary schools and secures the support of the faith representatives whilst the hosting school RS Department staff make all the local arrangements to accommodate the pupils (approximately 210 per venue).

A series of workshops are provided throughout the day by representatives from a range of different faith communities, most of whom are SACRE representatives. The majority of workshops have been created by the RE Consultant to ensure they reflect the Agreed Syllabus enquiry based approach. A detailed 40 minute lesson plan and specific thinking skills based activities are provided for the faith representatives to support them in working with the children (see attached example). Each class of pupils experience five different workshops throughout the day (see attached example programme) giving them opportunity to meet and engage with members from five different faiths.

Children thoroughly enjoy the sessions and are totally absorbed in the activities provided. Every pupil is invited to give an evaluation of the day and comments are always extremely positive. "The best thing today was learning about all the different religions." "I have learnt that everyone's committed to their own faith but they understand each other's as well."

Feedback received from primary schools indicate that the days are extremely valuable in terms of supporting religious education and also supporting transition through an opportunity for

familiarisation with the secondary school setting and in particular in meeting the RS Department staff.

Evaluations from primary school teachers indicate that they appreciate the efforts of workshop providers in pitching the activities at an appropriate level, and communicating with pupils effectively. Given that the workshop providers (faith representatives) are not qualified teachers they demonstrate great skill in providing inspirational sessions.

Views of both teachers and the young people have been taken into consideration for planning the next event.

Media coverage of the event is featured in several local newspapers and in this way, it is hoped that members of the public can appreciate the value of community cohesion. Newspapers have reported that County Councillor Liz Hackett Pain, Monmouthshire's cabinet member for Schools and Learning and Chair of SACRE said: "It is wonderful to see so how many young people involved in this project. They have participated with such enthusiasm to all aspects of these special days. They have had fun with time to reflect on the meaning of faith."

Religious Education consultant Gill Vaisey who organised the four events added: "The response from each and every pupil has shown what a huge success the events have been and what an incredibly valuable experience it has proved to be for our Year 6 pupils across Monmouthshire. SACRE is so grateful to all its faith representatives and workshop providers who give so freely and generously of their time to work with the pupils. This has been a wonderful opportunity for pupils and they have experienced how exciting and valuable it can be to learn about different beliefs and practices whilst enabling them to become better equipped to live in a mutually understanding and respectful society."

Originally when SACRE started organising the events the local authority helped with providing funding to cover the cost. In the last few years SACRE members have been determined to continue with the events but have done things slightly differently in order to minimise the need for funding from the LA. The impact is the same but with little cost due to the generosity of our faith representatives.

A number of Monmouthshire primary schools have been so inspired by the RE Days that they have organised a similar event within their own schools for all pupils from Reception to Year 6.

In order to share best practice, Monmouthshire SACRE made a presentation of these innovative RE Days to the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE). WASACRE commended the work of Monmouthshire SACRE members in providing such valuable experiences for pupils within its authority.

Schools in neighbouring authorities have since been inspired to follow a similar model and have invited Monmouthshire SACRE members to contribute to their own RE Days.

In addition to the positive impact these days have had on pupils and teachers, the faith representatives have formed real friendships and a sense of team spirit which is now clearly evident.

### **Individual Support for Schools and Nursery Settings**

Individual SACRE faith representatives are now frequently invited into schools to speak to children about their faith and culture.

Most recently, SACRE has been supporting maintained and non-maintained nursery settings and has produced a list of those faith representatives who are particularly confident to work with this age group. This initiative followed a review of religious education provision across all early years settings which was carried out by the School Improvement Officer responsible for this phase of education following her attendance at a SACRE meeting. Whilst it is acknowledged that RE is non-statutory for nursery pupils, Monmouthshire LA is keen that all children from the age of three receive the same entitlement as other children in the Foundation Phase of education (3 – 7 years). SACRE works closely with the appropriate School Improvement Officer to ensure that settings are aware of the opportunities and resources to support effective and age appropriate provision of RE.

### **Training and Awareness Raising**

SACRE's faith representatives have recently expressed a wish to experience and learn from each other's school based workshops. We are therefore currently in the process of organising a new series of events to enable faith representatives the opportunity to share their workshops and make presentations to other SACRE members. We plan to extend an invitation to these sessions to teachers across the authority's schools.

### **Celebrating Successes by Pupils and Schools**

In 2010 when the revised Estyn inspection framework was introduced with no requirement to inspect specific subjects, the committee discussed how it could be more effective in its monitoring role or RE and Collective Worship. We developed a process of requesting self-assessment from schools to submit to SACRE following their inspection. The self-evaluation is considered by SACRE alongside a summary of the inspection report which highlights any evidence of the provision of RE or Collective Worship. SACRE writes to each school commending them on their areas of success and providing advice on how any areas identified for development can be addressed.

SACRE receives regular updates and presentations from its teacher representatives on their initiatives to provide stimulating and engaging experiences in RE. This is then shared through the termly RE News bulletin which is distributed to all schools.

The SACRE committee also visits schools to meet with and hear the experiences of students studying various issues and themes in RE. One of the most notable recent visits was to one of the SACRE teacher representative schools to learn of the project undertaken by Year 9 pupils on understanding Islam and countering radicalisation and extremism. Following a presentation of the outline of their course of study, four students engaged with SACRE members in a stimulating and thought provoking question and answer session.

As the work undertaken by the students, with the leadership of the teacher, was so impressive, SACRE arranged for its County Council's Communications Team to liaise with the Head of RS to produce a press release as a way of promoting this excellent work with a wider audience and in particular with members of the public.



## **Agreed Syllabus Support Material**

### Foundation Phase

Comprehensive Foundation Phase support material entitled 'Think Topic' was distributed to all settings and schools within the authority in summer 2008.

The production of the material in the form of a CD and hard copy was a joint project with two other authorities. A working party of teachers, Foundation Phase Training Officers and the RE Consultant developed topic based support material with religious education included as appropriate. Additional religious education support material was included in the pack as it was recognised that this area of learning often needs additional guidance.

### Key Stage 2 / 3

Following an extensive project to develop and trial support material aimed at raising standards in RE across the authority, the comprehensive Key Stage 2 / 3 Agreed Syllabus Support Material was made available to all schools in autumn 2008. The material includes an outline long term plan for Key Stage 2 'straight classes' and a long term plan for 'mixed classes' over a two year cycle. There are twelve units of work, six of which are exemplified with samples of pupils' work. All of the units promote a skills based approach to RE and provide a wealth of activities and specific learning objectives. All of the material was trialled extensively and shown to raise standards in the pilot schools. The units are aimed to be supported by the use of the 'Developing Primary RE' series produced by RE Today Services and schools have been encouraged to invest in the purchase of these publications.

Key Stage 3 teachers should find the support material helpful in providing an insight into the provision of RE at Key Stage 2 and the quality and standards of pupils' work being achieved. Many of the units identify key resources and areas of exploration for Key Stage 3 which will effectively build on prior learning.

Feedback from schools using the support material has been extremely positive. Teachers have found the material easy to use and very effective in supporting a skills based approach to religious education.

### **Revision to GCSE RS Specifications**

SACRE has taken up concerns from the teaching community about the new changes in RE GCSE examinations. It is felt important to act as a voice for concerns. Letters were sent to Welsh Government and to the WJEC examination body in Wales.

## **5: Evaluation and planning for the future:** (no more than 200 words)

Where has the SACRE's work and implementation of its approach been most successful, and why? What lessons were learned? In what way was the SACRE's approach improved as a result? What are major barriers to further improvement, and how might they be overcome? Have any ideas and recommendations be made for the next Agreed Syllabus Conference?

SACRE's major success is in its membership and their proactive approach to working to support schools in the provision of RE. This has provided pupils and teachers with first hand experiences of meeting and engaging with a wide range of faith representatives. It has also had an impact on the support for RE from parents and the local community.

The success of the initial work of faith representatives with schools has resulted in a continuation of these valuable days and expanded into regular visits to schools by individual members of SACRE.

Pressures on schools in terms of time and other responsibilities and commitments prevent more regular RE Days being held for pupils.

All SACREs in Wales have deferred an Agreed Syllabus Conference pending the development of the new curriculum in Wales due to the proposal that RE will become part of the new Humanities Area of Learning and Experience.

**Please return the completed nomination to [paul@accordcoalition.org.uk](mailto:paul@accordcoalition.org.uk)**

If you wish to submit further external or supplementary evidence for consideration by the judges, please consider including appropriate web links in this form. If you only have information as a hard copy then please consider scanning and uploading it online.