



25th Anniversary of NASACRE Annual Conference: Stronger Together- celebrating the power of community.

24th May, 2018, at Merchant Taylors' Hall, 30 Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8JB.

Well over 100 people attended the day conference, and at least 51 SACREs were represented.

The **Rt Hon Charles Clarke, Patron**, opened the conference with recognition and praise for the work of SACREs over 25 years, and highlighted the growing importance of their work in contemporary UK. He proposed that they should develop their remit even further, to include a wider role of encouraging community cohesion, and development of stronger links with university departments of Theology and Religious Studies.

Keynote 1: Dr Vanessa Ogden, HT of Mulberry Girls School, and CEO of Mulberry Schools Trust, argued that RE today had four key tasks: to develop religious literacy/articulacy, in an age of the www, media misconceptions and fake news; to develop 'rich personal development' and awareness of self/identity in an age of social media, confusion and mental health concerns; for RE to engage directly in inter-faith dialogue, in order to experience real religion; to accept that the time had come for a national syllabus for RE, so that we can explain what we do to society, and provide well qualified /supported teachers to teach the subject.

We then held table discussions on points raised, and prepared feedback and questions for the afternoon Panel discussion.

After lunch, **David Hampshire, former Chairman of NASACRE**, gave a second Keynote talk on the work of the **Inter Faith Network Youth Project**, highlighting some of the outcomes, and lessons learned from it. Lessons for SACREs: 1. Know your area (lots of RE teachers live outside their school's local area); 2. We (adults) think in 'succession' models, trying to maintain structures, whereas YP focus on the work itself, regardless of institutional structures.

We then had **brief presentations from three SACREs**, highlighting recent projects: **Bradford**- a Collective Worship project, with special focus on schools who have determinations; **Hampshire**- A 'youth voice to SACRE' project (with key messages being: a) the primary school experience is very mixed; b) YP want broader information about religions rather than focussing on just a few); **Newham**- an anti-bullying project, providing video resources for RE & CW e.g. <https://vimeo.com/253115572> (P/W: StudentSacre2018)

In the next **Panel session**, various questions were discussed: Should we have a National Syllabus for RE? (2xYes; 1xNo; 1xMaybe); What should SACREs do where the LA is not supporting them? (CC-Legal powers are unclear on this); How can NA/SACREs encourage more RE teachers and RE Ambassadors?; How much impact can RE have, against social media, etc?; What can we do where there are home-school disconnects in values?; What should SACREs do about narrow provision 'faith' schools? (CC-Government needs to define various typologies of faith school; we need to challenge narrow provision).

AGM-Business Meeting: Reports were provided by various Exec members and agreed, new members were appointed, and it was confirmed that subscriptions will increase to £105. SACREs are also informed that the Final RE Commission

Report is due 12th September, and forewarned of a future proposal for consideration/ discussion, that the NASACRE Exec should mirror the four SACRE subgroups.

Tables exhibiting resources provided an interesting indication of the range of activities carried out across the country by different SACREs. Most of these were for looking only, but I did collect some take-away materials produced by Hampshire and Newham.

Although a very busy day, the event was very informative and enjoyable, and it was great to meet up with old and new RE friends from across the country. Merchant Taylors' Hall was a very grand venue, and they provided an excellent lunch!



Lunch in the open courtyard

Mark Plater, 30 May 2018.