

## Derby SACRE web site – “Opening up the SACRE”

### Background

- 1) Recent reports from Ofsted and government departments have stressed that SACREs need to engage with controversial issues, work towards community cohesion, oppose extremism and make themselves known to the wider community. SACREs remain invisible if people do not know about them.
- 2) Along with schools, SACREs have a responsibility to promote social cohesion but at the moment we cannot be sure what pupils, parents, teachers and the wider community actually think. For example:
  - a) Do we know what teachers think about worship in schools?
  - b) Do we know if primary teachers are happy with the RE syllabus?
  - c) Do we know about the general attitude of teachers towards RE?
  - d) Do we know what sort of support teachers would welcome from the SACRE?
  - e) Do we know what parents think about religion in schools?
  - f) Do we know how many pupils believe in fundamentalist extremism?
- 3) The SACRE can build on the work it has done in the past, make itself central to everything relating to religion in schools, take new initiatives and market itself so that its name and activities are known to pupils, parents, teachers and the wider community.

### Proposals

These proposals require no financial investment by the SACRE nor do they impose any additional workload on SACRE members – though the contributions and involvement of interested members would be most welcome.

The specific proposals are that Derby SACRE should:

- 1) have and run its own Internet web site under its own Internet address: [www.DerbySACRE.org](http://www.DerbySACRE.org). Derby City Council has agreed that this is acceptable if agreed by the SACRE.
- 2) have the site linked to from the Derby City Council web site,
- 3) use the site for all SACRE related material including:
  - a) the 2008 Agreed Syllabus,
  - b) SACRE working documents and communication with members (in a private area for members),
  - c) details of meetings and minutes of previous meetings,
  - d) links to other relevant material: Acts of Parliament, Ofsted reports, QCA Non-Statutory Framework for RE, reports by religious and non-religious bodies, other national, regional and local reports etc.
  - e) classroom resources for teacher.
- 4) use the site to place the work of the local SACRE into a local, national and international context,
- 5) allow each religion or belief represented on the SACRE a page to outline its beliefs and to explain its views in relation to religion and belief in schools – people have a right to know what ideas we represent,
- 6) use the site as the prime method for disseminating information to parents, pupils, schools, teachers, the media and the wider community,
- 7) use the site for promoting the work of the SACRE and encouraging comments and involvement from those in the wider community,
- 8) Use the site for initiatives (surveys, forums, competitions etc.) to stimulate the involvement of parents, pupils, teachers and the wider community in the work of the SACRE.
- 9) Organise a training course for those members of the SACRE who do not feel comfortable with computers and the Internet

### Marketing and publicity

- 1) Before any marketing takes place it would be helpful if the SACRE draw up a short statement of aims (“*Why worship and RE?*”) and policies (“*How we set about it.*”)
- 2) Those SACRE members who have the time and interest should be invited to speak to school staff meetings on the social cohesion campaign, to promote the web site and to promote the work of the SACRE.

- 3) It would be helpful for the SACRE to ask for volunteers to be official contacts for the local media: The Derby Evening Telegraph and Radio Derby. In that way the views of the SACRE can reach a the wider community and the media can call for comments on any issues relating to religion in schools.
- 4) If the web site becomes the central resource for the work of the SACRE it makes sense to publicise it as widely as possible. This can be done without great expense or effort with a poster campaign in schools and colleges. People tend to ignore posters which have a bland message so it would be best to be up-front on some of the controversial issues relating to religion, as recommended in recent reports, and make the poster as eye catching as possible. The SACRE, through its syllabus, is not afraid to handle controversial issues and this needs to be clear in the poster. A title of: "*Religion – a force for peace or a force for conflict?*" might be a good start and we can work with good designers to get a professional job done.
- 5) The SACRE is part of the democratic process, it meets its legal obligations and follows the recommendations of parliament and government bodies. It would therefore be reasonable for it to approach local MPs, explain what it is doing, and get statements of their support which may be used in its publicity material.

## Who has Internet access in 2007?

All teachers and all pupils have Internet access – either at home, in school or both.

Government national statistics for internet access show considerable differences between ages. Over 96% of those under 16 access the Internet regularly but this drops to 71% in the 65+ age group.

Source: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=5672>

It would be fair to say that, for those of school age, the Internet, via web pages, on line services and email, has become a standard method for communicating and for accessing information.

## Proposal for part of the web site to be designed for pupils

The most important group involved in education are obviously our pupils. As adults we can draw up a web site which may be suitable for other adults but we would find it extremely difficult to create one that would appeal to young people – given their almost impenetrable sub-culture!

It is recommended that we use young people to design part of the SACRE site for young people. This could be done in the form of a competition run from the web site inviting entries from local schools.

## Setting up and running the web site

The web site should be run to promote the work of the SACRE as a whole and not in the interest of any specific group represented on the SACRE.

- 1) The site will be maintained by a "webmaster" (a person who looks after a web site) whose sole task is a technical one – to set up the site and to maintain material on the site as required. The role of the webmaster will **not** be the source of material used on the web site.

Mike Lake, BHA representative on the SACRE, has volunteered to be webmaster. Mike has worked in computer software since joining RR in 1968, is Chairman of a local computer software company and has considerable experience in setting up and maintaining web sites. He was a UK representative on the International Telecommunications Union, a UN body based in Geneva, and was editor of an International fax security standard. He has considerable experience in computer security and data protection.

- 2) A small ad hoc SACRE working party will have oversight of the web site contents to ensure that it represents a fair and balanced view of SACRE issues.
- 3) The SACRE Clerk and the RE Advisor may produce and revise material for the webmaster to place on the site.
- 4) Members may submit material for the site to the RE advisor who may agree to have it uploaded by the webmaster. If the RE advisor does not feel the material to be suitable he may refer it to the SACRE working party for a decision. Any member whose material is then refused for the site may appeal to the whole SACRE.
- 5) Each religion or belief represented on the SACRE (currently Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Humanism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) may have its own page (up to 10,000 words) which it may use in any way it wishes to outline its beliefs and to explain its views in relation to religion and belief in schools.

## Cost and timing

The target is minimum cost and earliest possible availability.

The site will cost the SACRE or the Local Authority nothing to set up and nothing to run if:

- 1) it accepts the donation of the Internet domain name free of charge and with no strings attached,
- 2) it accepts the use of free web space with no strings attached,

- 3) it accepts an experienced volunteer to run the site (the “webmaster”).

The web site could be up and running within one week of a positive decision by the SACRE.

Should the SACRE decide to have its own physical web space it is recommended that this be purchased from PlugSocket.com (based in Ipswich). The cost of their Advanced Hosting Service is £64.99 per year. A dedicated domain name on this service would cost an additional £4.49 per year.

Should the SACRE decide to have a web site, but not to accept the suggestions above, it will be necessary to approach Derby City Council to provide estimated costs, timings and operating procedures.

## Privacy and confidentiality

If the website is used for surveys and for collecting the views of pupils, parents, teachers and the wider community, it is vital that the issues of privacy and confidentiality are addressed.

For example, when doing surveys:

- 1) Secure web pages must be used when collecting data. These are similar to the ones that protect private information when using a credit card to order products over the Internet.
- 2) The data, once collected, must be held in encrypted (“coded”) form at all times.
- 3) If data is held that would allow an individual to be identified it must be held in conditions that confirm to the Data Protection Act.
- 4) It should not be possible for the SACRE, or anyone else, to identify the individual completing the survey. People need to know that they can be honest and open with their answers. Teachers might not be willing to do this if their identities were revealed to their employer (the local authority) or their head teacher.
- 5) The validity of respondents needs to be checked. For pupil surveys the SACRE would provide teachers with printed pages containing unique entry keys which pupils must enter when completing a survey. The key:
  - a) Does not identify an individual pupil.
  - b) Is self checking– you cannot make up a key just to enter the survey.
  - c) Can be used only once.
- 6) For teachers, parents and the wider community an email confirmation system would be used to confirm that a response had been produced by someone with a real email address. Once the response was validated the email address would be deleted from the response data.
- 7) Prior to analysis the database will contain nothing that allows an individual respondent to be identified. The database will be held securely in encrypted format and not released to anyone.
- 8) It is anticipated that the information gained from analysing the data would be made public by the SACRE on its web site. Post-analysis information does not identify respondents and is no longer private or confidential.

## Demonstration site

A totally unofficial demonstration web site has been produced to show SACRE members what might be possible. The site address is:

<http://www.dryfireuk.co.uk/derbysacre>

### Notes:

- 1) This is **not** an official site and does **not** represent the views of the SACRE.
- 2) For convenience the site is stored in a **private** area of a commercial site belonging to a SACRE member.
- 3) The demonstration site is unknown outside SACRE members and the RE Advisor.

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