

## SACREs OF THE SOUTH

It was tempting to call it the Solent Syndicate ... Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight, and, at a stretch, Hampshire and Bournemouth. Misleading, though, as commercial gain did not feature among their motives for joining up.

This is an interesting, rich grouping: varied cultures - urban, suburban, rural and island, ensuring no-one is insular. Since 2007 these distinct SACREs have held extra network gatherings in the afternoon, rotating venues and chairs; and they intend to continue.

There was honest sharing of priorities, tensions, events and creative ideas. Three operate one Syllabus, and were checking on keeping in step with one another over its review (and this review vitally assisted by a joint working group).

What are the merits and pitfalls of SACRE members visiting schools and observing lessons? These were touched on. Should the visitors be briefed, even accompanied by an Adviser?

One proposed a school competition for a SACRE logo. Could others take this up too? But a second regretted it would clash with their own inter-faith competition, so the competition was abandoned. However, a third reminded us all that a logo was needed to launch the website, and invited ideas. A fascinating discussion ensued. How might a SACRE website best be branded and designed in order to serve the whole regional quintet? How could teachers in each Local Authority be induced to visit beyond their own LA for good ideas, events, resources? Should the site be titled "The Living Difference" ... as the Syllabus for 3/5 of the group was dynamically called? This found strong support. Under the canopy of RE, could good stuff about Community Cohesion and Collective Worship be included?

Further publicity, in the form of a pamphlet: one member circulated a draft text which would explain the work of SACRE to schools and faith communities around this region, and asked for feedback.

Difficulties with the media ... suppose a good, balanced resource is produced by one partner-in-syllabus. The press grab bits of it and distort it. In this controversy local politicians are under pressure to dissociate their schools from the distorted version. They appear to reject the initiative, and partners-in-syllabus seem to fall out among themselves. So ... there's need to establish a protocol ... partners, perhaps, to agree a joint press-release where matters of common interest are concerned?

Among the participants, I felt an atmosphere of commonsense and goodwill, in a forum where sharing is well-established.

I know there is ongoing thought of regional groupings for SACREs. This network seems to me the right size, and I guess a larger grouping might place strain on it.

I'm most grateful the five invited NASACRE to send an observer. Some neighbouring SACREs in other parts of England do meet and share, of course, and my two even operate jointly: more SACREs would benefit from such reinforcing co-operation.

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on behalf of NASACRE's Executive  
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