

Report on Kent Youth SACRE, October 16th 2013

The first meeting of the Kent Youth SACRE took place on October 16th in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Maidstone.

Sixteen secondary schools participated. There were 31 students and 17 teachers as well as nine members of SACRE in attendance.

Quality of discussion:

After an initial introduction students split into three different committees to discuss a key question:

- i) Why RE is important
- ii) What RE has helped me to understand and achieve
- iii) What helps students learn and make progress

After discussion in committee each committee gave feedback to the other members of the Youth SACRE. The specific feedback can be read in the minutes from the meeting. There then followed a wider debate amongst all Youth SACRE members about the importance and value of RE. A good range of students were able to participate in this and did so with insight and understanding. It was clear that a number of students were passionate about the importance and relevance of RE in the school curriculum. This was inspiring to hear.

The quality of discussion and feedback from students was high. Throughout proceedings students were engaged, motivated and keen to be able to contribute to the shaping of the future of RE in Kent Schools.

Evaluation:

Both the evaluation survey and discussion with students, teachers and SACRE members present indicated that there would be strong support for another Youth SACRE. Evaluation feedback, and my own view, would suggest that potentially fruitful areas for discussion in future SACRE include discussion of:

- i) The specific content of the Kent RE syllabus
- ii) Ways forward to safeguard the future of RE in Kent schools. Indeed, the latter could be a powerful vehicle to help school leaders, members of KCC and national government recognise the importance of RE within school.

The basic format of introduction, committee work, refreshment break, feedback and Youth SACRE debate worked well. This all fitted into the allotted time, 2-5.00pm very effectively.

Practical issues to address:

- i) Members of SACRE (or teachers) facilitating the committee discussions will need to spend some time planning together how they will facilitate discussion and agree the best way to give feedback.
- ii) Leadership of Youth SACRE. I was happy to make the time to put in place arrangements to ensure that this Youth SACRE could take place. However, I am not able to make this commitment on a permanent basis. I was exceptionally well supported by Carol Wade. My own recommendation is that the RE consultant should have responsibility for youth SACRE incorporated into his allocated time for SACRE responsibilities. This would help ensure a greater coherence, too, to the nature of the agenda of both the SACRE and Youth SACRE. Members of the SACRE should also, as they did this time, be prepared to give logistical support and time to the event.
- iii) In order to gain some momentum on youth SACRE I would recommend it meets twice a year.

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