**1. INFORMATION**

1.1 The RE Adviser attended the NASACRE conference this year on behalf of Bromley SACRE. The Chairman of Bromley SACRE was also there, but representing Southwark SACRE. It took place in Bristol on 6 December. The two main issues were: (i) self-evaluation of SACREs; and (ii) how to gain information about RE in our local schools.

1.2 The first session, by Barbara Wintersgill, HMI, was on the new OfSTED inspection process and its implications for SACREs. The most significant implication is that SACREs will no longer be able to evaluate the standards of RE and Collective Worship in their local authority schools from individual school OfSTED reports. Although schools will be inspected twice as often as before, there will be little, if anything, on religious education and just a brief evaluation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Instead, there will be an annual national HMI subject report based on the inspection of RE in only 30 primary schools and 30 secondary schools (out of 151 local authorities). Barbara suggested ways in which local authorities might survey their own schools. For example, secondary schools could be asked to fill in self-evaluation questionnaires on their RE departments. She believes that OfSTED’s inspections over the past decade have given RE status and helped it to become well established. She is now very concerned about the dearth of evidence, from primary schools in particular. She said that SACREs have never been so important as they are now, in terms of their support for RE and their role in gathering intelligence from their local schools to feed into the national picture via their annual SACRE reports.
1.3 The second session was presented by Julie Groves, the vice-chairman of NASACRE, in place of Denise Chaplin, secretary, who was unwell. It was on the use of the OfSTED self-evaluation guide for SACREs and we were shown Denise’s model for presenting the findings. Other practices were shared. For example, one SACRE has set up working parties on each of the five areas for self-evaluation, to report back every six months. It was emphasised that the SACRE self-evaluation is an on-going process to help SACREs assess the quality and effectiveness of their work and to inform their annual development plans.

1.4 The third session, also by Julie Groves, was on a new self-evaluation toolkit on Religious Education, produced by the Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) for Primary and Secondary RE subject leaders. It is available to schools free of charge on the REonline website. Although it is likely that only secondary schools will require this depth of information on a subject, in order to feed into its school Self Evaluation Form, it was felt that it would be very helpful for SACREs if even 10% of their schools (including Primaries) would send in this self-evaluation each year.

1.5 The final session was presented by Tony Parfitt from the Culham Institute (for research in RE). He had developed a database to deal with information from AREIAC’s self-evaluation of RE. Schools would feed the information straight into the database and it would be analysed for each subscribing local authority as well as giving a national picture. There was mixed reaction to this proposal. The drawbacks are the cost and that it would not give a national picture unless all local authorities contributed. One advantage would be the time saved by local advisers. Another is the fact that Voluntary Aided Church schools could now be included in this national survey of RE based on OfSTED inspections.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are asked to consider (i) the proposal to encourage a proportion of schools to send in a detailed self-evaluation of RE in their schools, and (ii) the proposal to contribute towards a national database of this information.

Background Documents: Nil