

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 17 November 2021

Present: **Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf**

Mohamed Sedky, Linda Goodwin, Julie Thompson, Sam Kirwan, Mohamed Parekh, Maddy Belle, Vicky Priestley, Philip Atkins, OBE, Mike Wilcox, Kath Perry, MBE and Paul Snape

Apologies for absence: Sam Phillips, Judy Wyman, Gabi Oldfield, Vickie Longson, Shaun Miles, Zoe Cahalan and Paul Northcott

Also in attendance - Mary Gale (SACRE advisor) and Mike Bradbury (Clerk)

PART ONE

99. Welcome to New Members (if any)

The Chairman welcomed two new members, Councillors Paul Snape and Kath Perry.

100. Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held on 1 July 2021

RESOLVED: That subject to the following amendment, the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 1 July 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman:

- Bottom of page 2 Staffordshire received approximately 2 % which was average, this should read "In line with recommendations" which was better than average.

It was noted that the Chairman had received verbal confirmation from the Cabinet Member that the review of the 'Agreed Syllabus' could be continued as planned.

101. Update on Key Issues

SACRE considered the report which covered the main issues affecting Religious Education (RE) in Staffordshire since the last meeting. Further to the written report, the following information was provided:

- Westhill legacy project – The project has restarted this year and was being very well received. There was now a waiting list of schools wishing to take part or contribute.
- CPD courses may start again after Christmas.
- Sacred Spaces support from Youthnet had not yet started back due to Covid but this would hopefully resume in the near future.

An update would be included at the next meeting. A question was asked on whether there had been any reluctance from schools to take part in extra curriculum activities and if they were concentrating on catching up on the core syllabus. It was reported that no change had been noticed in primary schools,

but it was felt that secondary schools may be giving more priority to the core curriculum.

- Ofsted inspections have now resumed. Mary Gale had used the website 'Watchsted' and searched for reference to religious education and Staffordshire. There were a number of references to RE, mostly positive. It was also noted that one school had received a recent inspection in Staffordshire and RE was referenced as the school was not using the Staffordshire's Agreed Syllabus, instead they were using a resource called 'Understanding Christianity'. The school had been contacted and the correct Syllabus is now being used. It was reported that this only happened occasionally as the AS was advertised widely to all schools.
- An 'Impact of SACRE' summary report had been written for 'Entrust' the trading organisation for SCC.
- NASACRE training had been provided and utilised online for the advisor on the writing of future SACRE annual reports. Appendix 1 outlined the format of future annual reports. The Chair pointed out that our annual report generally followed this format. The reports would be looked at by the DfE in future years.
- Training for advisors was also provided by AREIAC and Mary Gale, the advisor, would be attending the next available session on 30th November. A meeting of NATRE would also be held within the near future and Mary Gale would attend and provide a report for the next meeting of SACRE in February
- RE exam results – Provisional data suggests that Staffordshire had more entries in exams in 2020. Staffordshire are just 4% below the national average but this improvement may be due to the changes as a result of Covid-19 requiring teacher assessment grades and not externally marked exams.

It was noted that home educated children were not currently given direct support in RE but the syllabus was available on the web site. This may need further discussion with Council Officers who support home educated children.

Religious Education Quality Mark (REQM). SACRE have been approached by a school (St Chads Church of England Voluntary Controlled school, Pattingham) who felt that they had done all of the preliminary work to meet the REQM criteria, but they could not fund all of the application cost. The school had requested that SACRE fund part of the £475 cost of the application. SACRE members supported this application.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That funding of £475 be provided to St Chads Church of England voluntary school, Pattingham for the application to apply for the REQM.

102. NASACRE Update

The Chairman reported on the following activities/work that had been undertaken by NASACRE since the last meeting:

- NASACE continued to work on the new Annual Report format.
- The online training seminars were being held every month. The next would be on *how to maximise your application for a Westhill award.*

- As the longstanding Treasure of NASACRE, Rev Metcalf, the Chairman, was due to hand over responsibility in May 2022. Currently he is working in conjunction with the future treasurer.
- NASACRE had grown significantly over the years and was exploring how to develop itself as a not-for-profit organisation.

RESOLVED: That the update report be noted.

103. Update on Agreed Syllabus review process

The report was a recap for new members of the procedure for establishing an Agreed Syllabus Conference to develop/review the Agreed Syllabus.

The Education Act 1996 required Local Authorities to review their locally agreed syllabus every five years. Staffordshire's syllabus was due to be reviewed in 2021. An Agreed Syllabus Conference had to be established in order to produce a revised syllabus which would then be formally approved by the County Council.

The procedure for carrying out the review was listed in the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The SACRE Meeting was adjourned in order for the Agreed Syllabus Conference to be convened.

104. Agreed Syllabus conference

The Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) was convened.

- a) The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.
- b) Mary updated the ASC on the work undertaken since the last meeting which included:
 - Working parties had been set up and had held virtual meetings.
 - Discussions with stakeholders had started via email, teams meetings, governors, pupils, teachers and governor information school packs.

Questions asked included:-

 - what did they like about the syllabus?
 - what worked well?
 - what didn't they understand?
 - What would they like to see improved? etc.
 - There had only been 7 replies so far (out of hundreds) but this would increase as a reminder was due to be sent out to schools in the next information pack to schools in January.
 - A link to the questionnaire was in the agenda papers for information. Members were encouraged to take part.
 - The Vice Chair was asking the children at her school what they think of RE. Members were encouraged to contact their schools or those in their communities and visit to ask pupils/teachers their views. It was requested that this information be passed to Mary Gale.
 - Future actions and opportunities for engagement were listed in the report.

- Main feedback had been
 - a. Minor tweaks would be welcomed but not a major rewrite as schools were just getting to grips with the 2016 syllabus. However, one special school had requested a re-write, as they needed help with supporting their pupils.
 - b. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) information needed to be changed to comply with national changes.
 - c. There was little criticism of the current syllabus.
 - d. A number of schools had asked for support with planning the delivery of the syllabus and ways of marking the success of their delivery. This suggestion would also help in the development of the CPD courses.
 - e. A 'vision statement' had been requested, the Chairman pointed out that this should link in with the SCC's broader vision for education in the county.
 - f. Clarification on 'World Views' was also requested

It was noted that home schooling parents should use the syllabus.

All parents have a right to withdraw their children from RE, whether home schooled or in school.

It was also noted that there is another subject where parents can also withdraw their children ie Sex aspects of the Relationship Health and Sex Education (RHSE) curriculum. The teaching of this subject became statutory in September 2021.

RESOLVED: Each of the four SACRE Committees agreed to the Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Review and the work undertaken to date.

The SACRE meeting formally reconvened.

105. Annual Report for 2020-2021

SACRE considered the draft annual report which had been prepared, currently in the previous format, by the advisor, Mary Gale. The report covered the academic year 2020/21.

There was a small amendment to page 36 which related to a percentage error.

Members were asked that if they have any comments on the Annual report before the end of November, to let the Clerk know and these would be collated and forwarded to the advisor.

RESOLVED: That the draft Annual Report be noted and agreed subject to any minor changes made by the Advisor in consultation with the Chairman.

The report would then be shared with NASACRE and relevant SCC committees and schools.

106. The SACRE Budget 2021-2022

SACRE considered the update report on the current 2021/22 budget.

The meeting was informed that there had been a delay in the updating of the budget and that there had been a commitment of £5,000 which was not showing on the summary. The next outturn statement in February should show the correct position.

RESOLVED: That the budget position be noted.

107. Development Plan 2021-2022

The plan was a new process for the SACRE. It contained an action plan and also gave a RAG rating which estimated risk. This RAG rating would in future include additional arrows to further clarify the direction of travel.

RESOLVED: That the Development Plan be noted.

108. Applications for variation of practice

There were none on this occasion.

109. Date of future meetings

These were included on the agenda. The next meeting would be held on 2nd February 2022 at 2pm.

**Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Chairman**