

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 2 February 2022

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

Linda Goodwin, Julie Thompson, Judy Wyman, Gabi Oldfield, Vickie Longson, Vicky Priestley, Philip Atkins, OBE, Paul Northcott, Mike Wilcox, Ian Horsewell and Kath Perry, MBE

Apologies for absence: Tajinder Singh, Sam Kirwan, Mohamed Parekh, Sam Phillips, Lydia Bartlett, Maddy Belle, Zoe Cahalan and Paul Snape

Also in attendance: Mary Gale (SACRE advisor) and Mandy Pattinson (Clerk)

PART ONE

110. Update on membership (if any)

There had been no changes to the Membership since the last meeting.

Julie Thompson informed Members that it was Naw-Rúz, the Bahá'í New Year on 22 March and circulated a copy of their prayer book for information. Julie was thanked for bringing this to the attention members of SACRE.

111. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 17 November 2021

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 17 November 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that the SACRE Annual Report had been circulated to members of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee; NASACRE, the County Council and Entrust (for them to circulate as appropriate).

112. An 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 had resumed in October 2021 with seven schools taking part. Mary Gale had been able to visit 3 of the schools and had received positive feedback. The feedback and comments would be used to support the review of the current Agreed Syllabus (AS)

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses remained virtual. Two schools had been visited and demand seemed to be increasing.
- AREIAC - Mary Gale reported that she had attended a two day on-line RE conference organised by NATRE. Information from this conference would help to provide further resources to support schools in the summer term.
- Following a question on how previous £200 grants were allocated, it was reported that schools were informed of the grants through discussions with Mary Gale when they approached her for advice or guidance. The grants were open to all schools, but it was generally maintained schools who requested support.
- It was reported that Mary Gale's commission to support Staffordshire SACRE had been extended. She would continue to advise SACRE for another 12 months until March 2023.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

113. NASACRE Update

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

- NASACE had continued with online monthly seminars. A World Views seminar would be held next month. All members could register if they wished to join the seminar.
- NASACRE's next annual conference was due to be held on 23 May 2022, in person, in Birmingham. Dr Richard Kueh, the Ofsted lead for RE was due to address the meeting. It was hoped that the SACRE Chair and Advisor would attend.

RESOLVED: That the update report be noted.

114. Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)

The Education Act 1996 required Local Authorities to review its locally agreed syllabus every five years. Staffordshire's syllabus was due to be reviewed in 2021. An AS Conference had to be established in order to agree the revised. This would then be formally approved by the County Council.

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

The Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) was convened.

- a) The minutes of the last meeting held on 17 November 2021 were agreed.
- b) Mary Gale updated the Conference on the work undertaken since the last meeting which included:
 - Working parties had continued to meet. It was thought that timescales and deadlines would be difficult to meet. It was therefore suggested

that the ASC working party would need to meet again before the next scheduled meeting of SACRE and the ASC on June 29th 2021.

- Members were reminded that there was still an opportunity to complete the survey to express their views on the current AS, a link to which was in the report.
- Workshops would continue, so that further evidence could be gathered.
- All the feedback and comments received to date would be considered to support the writing of the revised draft AS by the ASC working party.
- It was agreed that there was some confusion amongst teachers over the purpose of the AS, with some schools presuming that it was a scheme of work with set lesson plans to follow. Many teachers who are not RE specialist feel anxious about teaching RE and look to the AS for support particularly if they have little experience of RE themselves. It was hoped that the revised Agreed Syllabus provide a scaffold to their teaching with appendices providing some examples of class plans etc..This would support teachers in their teaching.
- It was felt that there needed to be a clear and concise Vision' section at the start of the document. The Chairman proposed the following words (see italics) to be added to the draft for consideration at the next ASC working party meeting:

Vision Statement – 'The role of RE in schools is to help prepare and equip all pupils for life and citizenships in today's diverse and plural Britain through fostering in each pupil, *an increasing awareness of and sensitivity within the diversity of religious and world views.*'

The following comments were made regarding this suggestion:

- the term 'sensitivity' was important.
 - the need to revisit aspects on how to embrace differences was essential particularly after COVID-19.
 - the need to promote diversity and respect for all human beings was noted
 - extremism of any kind should be discouraged.
 - the need for the document to refer to religious and non-religious beliefs/world views was agreed and would be retained.
 - the need for teachers to actively encourage pupils to look at the world in different ways was to be promoted.
- It was agreed that; the assessment section; Early years; and SEND sections, all needed to be extended.
 - The recognition of Ofsted's education inspection framework regarding Intent, Implementation and Impact needed to be acknowledged.
 - British values, as set out in the current syllabus needed to be re-emphasised.

- Climate Change aspects could possibly be considered for inclusion if considered relevant.

Once again information on many of the above could be provided in the appendices.

It was noted that there would be a further meeting of the ASC working party before formal consideration of the revised AS by SACRE and then referred to the County Councils Cabinet Member for formal approval.

If any member had further suggestions, they were encouraged to email Mary Gale, and these would be considered for inclusion in the draft documentation.

RESOLVED:

- a) Each of the four SACRE Committees agreed to the Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Review and the work undertaken to date.
- b) That an additional working group meeting be held on 11 May 2022.

The SACRE meeting formally reconvened.

115. Reflection on the Workforce Census 2021

A workforce census had been completed by schools' country-wide for the Department for Education (DfE). This was an annual task. NATRE had provided SACRE as part of the subscription with a workforce census breakdown for Staffordshire schools on the number of teaching hours allocated to the teaching of RE. This enabled SACRE to reflect on the information especially where schools had reported that they did not '*allocate teaching hours*' to RE.

It was felt that a zero return was probably due to misinterpretation, as some of the schools showing a 0% return were Catholic schools and would obviously teach RE. These school websites indicated that RE was taught. It was thought that possibly the time was being logged under another heading such as Philosophy and Ethics.

It was agreed that Mary Gale would look into this and offer advice to schools if necessary. This would be carried out sensitively.

Mary Gale had provided Entrust with this information for them to consider the best way forward.

RESOLVED: That Mary Gale further investigate the schools with 0% return to clarify the situation.

116. 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 would be approximately £490 left in the budget at the end of the financial year.

SACRE was informed that Mary Gale had been approached by the Woodlands Federation for support and training in RE following a recent Ofsted inspection. It was felt that they could be offered a £200 grant subject to it being used to support any training needs they had.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the budget position be noted.
- b) That The Woodlands Federation be offered a grant of £200 to support teacher training in RE, the impact of which should be reported back to a future meeting of SACRE.

117. Development Plan 2021-2022

The Development plan contained the SACRE action plan and also gave a RAG rating which estimated risk. It was noted that there had been some improvement in ratings since the last meeting, particularly in ASC working party and engagement with stakeholders.

RESOLVED: That the Development Plan be noted.

118. Applications for variation of practice

There were none on this occasion.

119. Dates of future meetings

Future SACRE dates were noted as per the agenda.

The next meeting of the ASC working party would take place on 11 May 2022 at 3pm, venue to be agreed. Mary Gale to try and book a room at the main Entrust headquarters for this, teachers who had attended previous working party meetings would be invited to attend anytime between 3pm and 5pm.

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