

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 29 June 2022

Present: Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf

Linda Goodwin, Sam Phillips, Lauren Nicholson Ward, Gabi Oldfield, Zoe Cahalan, Vicky Priestley, Philip Atkins, OBE, Kath Perry, MBE and Amy Bayliss-Fox

Also in attendance: Mary Gale (SACRE Advisor), Mandy Pattinson and Simon Humble (Clerks)

120. Apologies

Julie Thompson, Sam Kirwan, Mohamed Parekh, Judy Wyman, Vickie Longson, Maddy Belle, Paul Northcott, Mike Wilcox and Paul Snape

121. Update on Membership

The SACRE formally welcomed Amy Bayliss-Fox who has replaced Lydia Bartlett as a representative of the Salvation Army. Zoe Cahalan was also welcomed.

122. Declaration of Any Other Business

There were no declarations of any other business on this occasion.

123. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 February 2022

A minor amendment was requested of Minute 112 to remove the duplicated sentence starting "Further to the SACRE considered the report..."

The Chairman referred to minute 115, and informed the SACRE that Mary Gale had contacted the various schools that had reported a 0% return of allocation of teaching hours to RE on the workforce development census, and it was confirmed that those schools were teaching RE.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 7 February 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

124. 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:

- Media release regarding RE being taught in schools. It had been recorded in some areas that there had been a falling record of people taking part in RE with regards GCSE and A levels. However, in other areas there had shown a significant rise of practice. This media release had come about as a result of the 0% return of allocation of teaching hours to RE on the workforce development census.
- Reported that there is no central government funding for RE, though pleased to report that there are charity project funds and grants available.
- Information was provided that showed where Staffordshire SACRE received support and guidance including, NASACRE, REC, NATRE and AREIAC.
- Ofsted had undertaken some research into what good practice in RE should look like in schools. There was concern over RE nationwide, particularly in High Schools and Secondary Schools where children were not following the subject through to GCSE or A level. There was much better provision in primary, first and middle schools. This is considered carefully when Ofsted inspect schools. Ofsted intend to produce another report in 2023.
- Westhill legacy project – Funding had been received which had allowed Staffordshire to run Explore, Engage, Reflect projects in conjunction with the Youth Net, and with support of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Services (MEAS), as part of our Agreed Syllabus (AS). Feedback was provided by Youth Net, particularly around the behaviour of some of the children – mainly as a result of this being one of the first completely interactive face to face sessions since COVID-19. It was also raised that the SCARE could consider if any additional funding could be allocated to support continued delivery of these sessions in the future.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Mary Gale continued to support RE leaders in several schools through email, virtual meetings and face to face meetings. Mary had received requests from some schools for CPD sessions to take place. Entrust had approached Mary Gale to run face to face courses in the autumn 2022 and spring 2023 terms to provide network support for teachers either at the central training centre or in individual schools.
- Some schools had requested copies of the new AS. Mary had reassured these schools that the current AS remains the syllabus until the new one is published, and that the new versions was still in development, but as soon as it was finalised it would be shared.
- Governors, through the Governor Information Pack, continue to receive updates on RE in Staffordshire, the status of the AS and the process for the review. They have been encouraged to work in their link governor roles to discuss the impact of the current AS.

- An update from the Association of Religious Education Inspectors and Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) and the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) Meetings was presented. This information was specifically centred around the story of Harry Potter and whether it included a religious message.
- Update on RE Quality Mark application - St Chad's in Pattingham, which SACRE had agreed to fund. Information had been collated and will be submitted in autumn term ready for assessment. Mary Gale will be visiting St Chad's to look through the information prior to submission. Lauren Nicholson-Ward and Zoe Cahalan both offered informal assistance as they had both recently been involved in the process.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

125. NASACRE Update including conference report

The Chair and Mary Gale attended the virtual NASACRE conference. Mary informed the SACRE that during the conference an opportunity arose to share the role of the Staffordshire SACRE with other participants. It became apparent that the Staffordshire SACRE was delivering significantly more than other SACREs which was testament to the work of members.

It was highlighted that with the pressure towards academisation and the reduced roles of local authorities, there was a question mark around the medium to long term futures of SACREs. They are still statutory, and the government still requires LAs to have them, but the future role is unclear.

Following a question relating to the possible demise of SACREs and the future of RE, it was confirmed that RE would remain in the syllabus, but that it might be managed in a different way.

RESOLVED: That the update report be noted.

126. Agreed Syllabus Conference

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. Attendance and apologies as for the meeting of SACRE.

- a.** The minutes of the last meeting held on 7 February 2022 were agreed.

It was noted that there had been some slippage in terms of the timescale for the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus (AS). Implementation had now been earmarked for January 2023.

- b.** Further to the report, Mary Gale updated the ASC on the work undertaken since the last meeting and presented a revised draft of the AS.

The ASC was informed that a thorough engagement process had been undertaken with key stakeholders to ensure the new AS meets the needs of the end user. The Chair highlighted the amount of work, number of changes and responses to specific comments that had been made since the last iteration. The updated AS takes account of how stakeholders have responded to the syllabus in the schools, what is going on in the wider world and what statutory factors need to be considered.

The ASC was also informed that certain elements of the AS had been shared with specific stakeholders, such as Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) providers, to ensure all needs were being met appropriately.

It was explained that the formatting of the AS was not yet finalised and that some additional editing was required before the final draft would be ready. This would be brought back to the next meeting of the ASC in November ready for adoption by formal vote.

It was noted that stakeholders had asked for more information to be included in the AS relating to how RE should be planned. It was acknowledged that the AS couldn't provide lesson plans for every year group in every school. Instead a section entitled "Planning your RE" had been included to support schools, by providing the fundamental requirements that should be included to ensure the three themes of Explore, Engage and Reflect were covered.

The ASC was informed that Ofsted were looking for connectivity within the curriculum so that children can remember more and explain more about the different religions and worldviews in greater depth.

The ASC received additional information relating to constructing the curriculum in the EYFS. This had been developed using legislation and the Early Learning Goals.

In response to a question proposing the use of a "curriculum roadmap" that would support teachers in the development of RE, it was explained that, due

to timeframe conflicts between the development of an Agreed Syllabus (5 years) and the frequently changing teaching processes, it would not be possible to include a roadmap within the AS, but it may be possible to include it as an appendix to the document which could be updated and amended more frequently.

The ASC heard that the RE and British Values and the Inspection of RE (including the Ofsted Framework), had been added to the AS. It was suggested that some aspects of these may be included in an appendix rather than remain as a specific element of the AS.

The ASC recorded its thanks and gratitude to Mary Gale for the level and quality of work that had been undertaken to date.

RESOLVED: That the work undertaken to date in the development of the Agreed Syllabus be noted.

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

127. Media reports on Religious Education

a. The RE report card

The SACRE was presented with a number of “report cards” that showed how RE was valued within the UK over the last decade. The Report Cards focussed on, and provided a summary of, the Performance of Religious Education, RE in Society, School Performance, Government Performance, and the Future of RE – concentrating on a High-Quality Education in Religion and Worldviews. These report cards were put together by rethinker and more information can be found by following this link.
<https://www.rethinkre.org/re-report-card>.

b. Draft Handbook published by the RE Council (REC) on Religion and World views in the classroom: developing a world views approach

The SACRE was presented with the draft Handbook published by the REC on Religion and World views in the classroom. The purposes of this Handbook were to present a ‘national statement of entitlement’, equip and support syllabus and curriculum developers and set out the nature of a religion and worldviews approach. It was explained that there was a momentum towards providing this kind of approach to delivering RE. It was suggested that in the future this might become built into RE in a more statutory or directive way and may need to be further considered and revisited by SACRE.

It was also explained that in the past RE focussed on religious literacy, but the REC Handbook suggests RE should now focus on both religious and world views in the classroom.

The main elements of the draft handbook include:

- An Outline and rationale for the development
- Explaining what people mean by 'religion'
- Explaining what people mean by 'worldview'
- The value of worldviews in terms of content and approach
- Subject knowledge in school and community contexts
- Revised National Statement of Entitlement (NSE)
- Developing pupils' personal worldviews
- Fulfilling the National Statement of Entitlement
- Connecting the NSE with current practice
- Applying disciplinary methods
- How to use the NSE to develop a syllabus
- Using the NSE to develop questions and construct units of work
- How this approach relates to GCSE.
- Models to assist with making good progress

Lauren Nicholson-Ward recommended a short video called "Nobody Stands Nowhere", produced by the Theos Think Tank, which introduces the idea of what is a world view and how it might affect you.

In response to a question relating to the feasibility of the REC Handbook replacing the Agreed Syllabus, it was confirmed that it was purely a consultative and optional document for consideration – it was not yet statutory and does not meet the requirements of the law. Furthermore, it was explained that the taught syllabus related to the status of a school. If the school was a maintained school, it was required to follow the Agreed Syllabus. Church of England aided schools followed diocesan Agreed Syllabus and guidance. Academy Schools could choose to follow any syllabus available within the country.

RESOLVED: That the RE Report Cards and Draft Handbook be noted.

128. The SACRE Budget 2021-2022 & 2022-2023

Approval was sought of SACRE to commit funds for the Engage Project and for the Christianity project – approximately £4,000.00, which will be used to provide workshop sessions to almost 800 children.

In addition, a further £1,500.00 was requested to be committed for the time to rewrite the Planning and Assessment suggestions to go in the Appendix to the Agreed Syllabus.

Following this £800.00 will remain available in the SACRE Budget which would be revisited in November.

In response to a question relating to the use of the remaining budget to create an award for Staffordshire Schools that exhibit "Commendable work within RE", it was confirmed that this was a practice that took place in the past but had since ceased to happen, primarily due to capacity of officers and budget restrictions. It was acknowledged as something that could be considered in the future.

RESOLVED: That the SACRE Budget 2022-2023 be received.

129. Development Plan 2021-2023

The Development plan was presented to the SACRE. This document contained the SACRE action plan and also gave a RAG rating which estimated risk of each objective. It was noted that one objective relating to the Launch of the Agreed Syllabus which had slipped to early 2023 remained in Red status.

It was explained that when the Agreed Syllabus had been launched the development plan would be updated to include objectives which would become the main focus of the SACRE in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Development Plan be noted.

130. Applications for variation of practice

There were none on this occasion.

131. Dates of next meetings

RESOLVED: That the dates of future meetings of the SCARE, as set out below, be noted:

- 16 November 2022
- 1 February 2023
- 28 June 2023

All meetings commence at 2:00pm unless otherwise stated.

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