

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 7 February 2018

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

Linda Goodwin, Mrs J Grundy, Sam Kirwan, Julie Thompson (Co-Optee), Diana Cutler, Tajinder Singh, Mohamed Parekh, Ian Lawson, Lauren Nicholson Ward, Mark Sutton, Judy Wyman and Vickie Longson

Apologies for absence: Paul Lewis, Dr Laow Panyasiri, Phillips, Bernard Peters and Syed Hussain

Also in attendance - Emma Jardine-Phillips and Julie Roberts

PART ONE

59. Welcome to New Members

The Chairman welcomed Gabi Oldfield, Society of Friends representative and Vickie Longson, Church of England representative, to the SACRE.

60. Minutes of the SACRE Meeting held on 8 November 2017

In relation to the election of Vice-Chairman the Chairman suggested that this be deferred to a later date.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 8 November 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

61. Update on Key Issues

The SACRE received an update on key issues that had occurred since their last meeting, including:

- a) Staffordshire schools had now received the SACRE Annual Report and a copy of the guidance on visits. Both documents had been well received.
- b) The Commission on RE: The Interim Report came out in late September. In order to debate the content, and hopefully influence the final report, NASACRE had held a joint conference with AREIAC in Birmingham on 24 November 2017. Conference delegates were able to discuss vital questions regarding The Commission on RE: The Interim Report, including what its recommendations might mean for pupils, teachers, advisers and SACREs. Amongst the recommendations were:
 - A National Entitlement to Religious Education for all pupils
 - Holding schools to account for their provision for religious education
 - A new and expanded role for SACREs
 - A National Plan for improving teaching and learning

The conference panel included: Rt Hon. Charles Clarke (patron of NASACRE); Denise Cush; Dr. Anthony Towey; and Lat Blaylock.

- c) NASACRE was working with AREIAC, AULRE and NATRE to organise a two-day conference in Crewe (13-14 October 2018) which aimed to enhance the quality of Religious Education by drawing together professionals in RE – teachers, academics, researchers, advisers, and providers of professional development. The organisers warmly invited proposals for a practical workshop, academic seminar, or talk, in one of the breakout sessions. They would consider all proposals and reserved the right to accept, reject or combine proposals where appropriate. They were particularly keen to draw on the expertise of members of SACREs from the faith communities, and were asking members of SACRE if they could offer a workshop/seminar/talk at the conference of 20, 30 or 60 minutes where they could help others from the world of RE to better understand their faith and how to present it to pupils.
- d) The 25th Jubilee Conference and Annual general Meeting of NASACRE would be held on Thursday 24 May 2018 in London. Full details of the conference, which would be themed “Stronger Together – Celebrating the Power of Community” would be circulated nearer the time. The cost would be £100 per delegate and would be funded from the SACRE budget. Members were asked to let the Chairman know if they wished to attend.
- e) In December 2017 the BBC produced its report “Religion and Ethics Review”. There was a definite focus on young people and enabling them to access high quality, age-appropriate information about religions and beliefs in an accessible way. This would be of interest to schools, as was the continued commitment shown to supporting Religious Studies GCSE. To improve religious literacy the “mainstreaming” of religion in drama was seen to be important – putting religion back into the minds of viewers in a positive way. Interesting points of action from the review included recognition that journalists needed to be trained in religion and belief and that editors should be much better educated about religion so that it could be appropriately represented. The BBC had also pledged to make 2019 a “Year of Religion” across all of its platforms. SACREs could capitalise on this and make 2019 a “Year for Religious Education” for all children and young people in schools in their geographic area, irrespective of whether they were LA schools or not.
- f) A report commending England’s 42 Anglican cathedrals for their continued importance as places of worship, their wider community work and their commitment to promoting local economic growth was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on 29 December 2017. It was the culmination of a year-long tour which saw the Minister for Faith, Lord Bourne, visit all of England’s 42 Anglican cathedrals to better understand their continued importance both to local communities and wider society. The report set out the outcomes of Lord Bourne’s visits, but it was not intended for a school audience. However, it had some interesting findings which schools might find useful. It was 20 pages long and covered the sort of work that Anglican cathedrals did:
 - Helping refugees
 - Supporting the homeless and rough sleepers
 - How cathedrals can be hubs for regeneration and businesses
 - How cathedrals are architecturally, artistically and culturally significant.

What may also be of interest to pupils was the number of jobs that a cathedral generated in the local area.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be noted.

62. GCSE Results 2017

SACRE received a statistical analysis of the standards achieved in GCSE and GCE Advanced Level Religious Studies by pupils examined in the summer of 2017. In accordance with the SACRE remit, the analysis of GCSE and A level results only took account of local authority maintained schools. However, as more schools became academies it was commented that the list would become less and less and would not demonstrate a meaningful picture of Staffordshire's results. It was suggested that for the future it would be more helpful to include the results of academies.

Overall, both national results and Staffordshire's results for GCSE Religious Studies in 2017 were broadly in line with overall results achieved in 2016. Results for all pupils showed that pupils in Staffordshire achieved slightly below the national average at grades A*-C but in line with the national average for grades A*-G. It was important to take note of the number of pupils on role versus the number of entries. This gave an insight into the provision that different schools had in place for pupils at Key Stage 4.

This year there was a gap in results achieved nationally in comparison with those achieved locally for A level grades A-B. National results for A level Religious Studies in 2017 were broadly in line with overall results achieved in 2016, but Staffordshire's results were lower than national. Results for all pupils showed that although pupils in Staffordshire achieved slightly below the national average at grades A*-B, they performed very well across the full spectrum of grades A*-E. It was noted that the number of entries per school was small, but that this was not unexpected at Key Stage 5 for which examination courses would be optional. It was agreed that Staffordshire schools were to be commended for continuing to offer their pupils the opportunity to study for an A level qualification in Religious Studies.

SACRE requested that letters of congratulation be sent to those schools whose pupils had achieved commendably above the national average results for those achieving A*-C in GCSE RE. They agreed that letters should also be sent to those high achieving schools at A level.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) The report be received; and
- b) Letters of congratulations be sent to the schools whose pupils achieved results above the national average in GCSE and A Level Religious Studies.

63. Compliance at KS4

The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus required all pupils in Key Stage 4 (KS4) to follow an accredited examination syllabus in RE. However, the 2017 examination results suggested a varied picture of compliance with this requirement at KS4 in maintained

schools. The DfE had published its response to the consultation over the EBacc in July. In paragraph 72 there was a re-affirmation of the statutory nature of RE in all maintained schools:

“We have considered suggestions to include additional subjects or pillars with the EBacc but have decided that this could reduce pupil choice at GCSE to the point where no other subjects can be studied. Religious Education must be taught to all pupils until the end of Key Stage 5, a qualification (such as GCSE religious studies) should be offered at the end of Key Stage 4 to accredit pupils’ knowledge and understanding. The proportion of pupils in state funded mainstream schools entering a GCSE in religious studies remains high at 47% in 2015/16.”

The SACRE, in fulfilling its monitoring role, could act when a school was not fulfilling its statutory duties with regard to RE.

Members were asked to consider the current wording of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus, as it applied to KS4. In particular, if the wording “all pupils should” should be strengthened by changing it to “all pupils must” follow an accredited course. They were also asked to consider using some of the SACRE budget to commission the RE Consultant’s time to visit Staffordshire’s maintained secondary schools to gather an accurate picture of compliance in RE. The findings of this research could then be presented at the summer meeting to enable member to determine what, if any, action was required to ensure that schools were fulfilling their statutory obligations with regard to RE. It was agreed that it was important to gather this information before considering any amendment to the wording of the Agreed Syllabus.

The RE Consultant confirmed that there was sufficient funding in the budget to cover the time it would require to undertake the school visits, and agreed that it was important to talk to the staff actually delivering the teaching, not just the SLTs in schools. In response to a query around the powers of SACREs to take action on this issue members were informed that a test case was currently being brought by NASACRE to establish this.

RESOLVED – That funding from the SACRE budget be used to commission the RE Consultant’s time to visit Staffordshire’s maintained secondary schools to gather an accurate picture of compliance in RE at KS4.

64. SACRE Budget 2017-18

SACRE received a breakdown of the current budget for the financial year 2017-18. Members were reminded that the total budget allocation was £12,860, with an additional Westhill/NASACRE Award of £2725. There was an amount remaining of £5110.42 with a further £500 committed for outstanding invoices from the Explore-Engage-Reflect project.

RESOLVED – That the current budget position be noted.

65. NASACRE Update

- a) Members were informed that a debate was currently taking place over the question of whether Agreed Syllabuses should be publicly available and free of charge. This was the case for the Staffordshire Syllabus, with the proviso that

anyone using it acknowledged that it belonged to Staffordshire. However some Syllabuses were password protected and a charge was made for others, particularly if fees had been paid for consultancy work on them.

- b) On the NASACRE website the Frequently Asked Questions section had been slimmed down.
- c) The next round of bidding for the Westhill/NASACRE Awards was commencing, but as Staffordshire SACRE had received an award in the last round no bids would be made this time.

RESOLVED – That the Update be noted.

66. Applications for Variation of Practice

There were none on this occasion.

67. Explore - Engage - Reflect

Staffordshire SACRE had been awarded £2,725 to complete the Explore-Engage-Reflect project. This consisted of a Christian and Muslim experience which was led by adherents to the faiths who were skilled in the field of education. It was designed to be fully interactive with pupils exploring artefacts, images and text; engaging with key questions relevant to the faith in question; and reflecting on what it means to live your faith within England through a real opportunity for dialogue. It had taken place on 22 November 2017, and had proved very successful. Over 80 young delegates had attended, and were provided with an ipad to use to document their experiences. Using an app called “Book Creator” pupils were able to video, photograph, record voice notes and add text to enable them to capture their learning in a virtual environment. At the end of the event schools were asked to upload their e-books into a virtual classroom hosted by the Showbie platform (Showbie was available either as an app on ipads or on any android device). A resource pack of preparation and follow up materials was provided to prepare schools for using the technology and to support pupils to get the maximum benefit from the experience. The virtual Showbie classroom now acts as a legacy resource, supporting our schools. It has documented the experience of the exhibition, allowing pupils to share their learning creatively with their peers and also acting as an inspiration for schools wishing to put together their own interfaith experience in school. The virtual classroom has been made available to all Staffordshire schools as a supportive aspect for the syllabus. The two organisations involved in creating the exhibition had managed to create a mobile resource that could be used in any school or venue wishing to use them. Feedback from pupils had been positive and enthusiastic. An article on the event would be forwarded to RE Today and distributed to Staffordshire schools.

RESOLVED – That the success of the Explore-Engage-Reflect project be noted.

68. AOB

A member reported that they had recently attended a conference of middle schools heads of RE, where there had been very positive and complimentary feedback on the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

69. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – That the next SACRE meeting be held on Wednesday 20 June 2018, at 2.00 pm at The Kingston Centre, Stafford.

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