

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 1 February 2023

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

Judy Wyman, Gabi Oldfield, Shaun Miles, Philip Atkins, OBE, Paul Northcott, Mike Wilcox, Paul Snape and Amy Bayliss-Fox

Also in attendance - Mary Gale and Simon Humble

146. Apologies

Apologies were received Linda Goodwin, Julie Thompson, Sam Kirwan, Sam Phillips, Lauren Nicholson Ward, Vickie Longson, Maddy Belle, Zoe Cahalan, Vicky Priestley, Ian Horsewell, Kath Perry, MBE and Claire Tomlinson

147. Welcome to New Members (if any)

There were no new members to welcome.

148. Declaration of Any Other Business

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

149. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 16 November 2022

It was noted that the acronym SACRE had been misspelt as SCARE on two occasions. The amendment was made on the formal minutes prior to them being signed by the Chair.

Resolved: That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 16 November 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair.

150. Matters arising of minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022

A copy of the "Vision and Aims" page from the Agreed Syllabus was shared with SACRE members for comment. This had been updated following discussions at the SACRE meeting held in November 2022. No comments were made.

Agenda item 137 – Update on RE Quality Mark application. In response to a request for additional information relating to the Religious Education (RE) Quality Mark, it was explained that the RE Quality Mark acknowledged and celebrated outstanding RE being taught in Schools. Schools can apply to put themselves forward to be officially assessed to determine how well they delivered Religious Education over all age groups. Following the assessment Schools can be awarded a bronze, silver or gold award.

Agenda item 137 – Standards. In response to a question whether an updated figure for children sitting Religious Studies (RS) exams in Staffordshire had been provided, it was confirmed that the figure was still being chased.

In response to a question asking if the statistics shown included Catholic Schools, it was confirmed that the data provided included all schools.

Agenda item 137 – National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) Update. In response to a query relating to the location of the Regional Hubs, it was confirmed that they were still being set-up as per the NASACRE briefing. The National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) hub meetings continued to take place online.

In response to a question asking if teachers of AS and A level RE were all specialist, it was confirmed that it was difficult to appoint specialist RE teachers. In many cases, Humanities teachers were employed with transferable knowledge which allowed them to deliver RE lessons.

151. An Update on Key Issues

Advisor

It was highlighted that the current tenure of the RE advisor to SACRE was ending on the 31 March 23. At this stage it was unclear if the contract was to continue. Given the additional work that was required to support the launch of the new Agreed Syllabus for RE Councillor Snape offered to contact the relevant Cabinet Member and Senior Officer on behalf of the SACRE to ask for some clarity on the commission.

Continuous Professional Development

SACRE heard that Entrust commissioned the SACRE advisor to run a face-to-face autumn course which took place on 22 November 2022 and was attended by 20 schools. The course concentrated on a summary of the forthcoming revisions to the Agreed Syllabus and resources and ideas for effective RE. More courses were to be planned once the Agreed Syllabus was launched.

Governors received an update on RE in Staffordshire via the Spring 2023 Governor Information Pack. This included the status of the Agreed Syllabus and the process for the review. This information reached 300 plus schools and over 200 leaders, including governance professionals from a variety of schools - both maintained and academy.

The SACRE Advisor attended virtual meetings of the West Midlands Association of Religious Education Inspectors and Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) and a local National association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) online meeting. The next meetings were due to take place on the 6 and 14 March 2023.

The SACRE Advisor attended a Church of England (CofE) conference on 27 January 2023, this was the 5th CofE National conference. The title of the conference was Flourishing Together. The keynote speakers included Rt Hon Gillian Keegan - the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon The Lord Boateng, Dame Rachel de Souza - the Children's Commissioner for England and the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell. There were also a variety of workshops from serving teachers as well as recognised leading educational speakers. The overall message for delegates was that in order for young

people to flourish in modern Britain they needed an education that championed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, alongside high quality Religious Education/Studies. The conference confirmed that the outcomes that SACRE had strived to achieve through the delivery of the revised Agreed Syllabus championed all of the above.

Westhill Legacy project- Explore, Engage, Reflect (EER) in conjunction with Youth Net. Autumn Term 2022 report.

Members were reminded that SACRE had funded the Westhill Legacy projects from the 2022-2023 budget through commissioning the Entrust Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) to deliver workshops in conjunction with YouthNet. There was an initial delay in the release of money from the SACRE budget, but this had been rectified and two dates, one in February at Springhead Primary at Talke Pits and another in March 23 at Ravensmead Primary at Bignall End had been arranged. Confirmation is expected of a date to support Baldwins Gate CE VC Primary school. Seven additional schools in the Newcastle area had been contacted and responses were still expected.

Workforce data

SACRE was reminded that, as part of the census for November 2021, Schools were expected to report the number of hours spent teaching each subject to the DfE.

It was noted that many schools in Staffordshire recorded that they did not allocate any time to teaching RE or RS.

The Schools were contacted, and in some cases visited, by the SACRE Advisor. It transpired that the issue was not always with the teaching of RE/RS, but with the completion of the census forms. It was noted that, in some cases, the census return was not a true account of the number of hours being allocated to the teaching of RE/RS. The SACRE Advisor would continue to work on this project as time and resources allowed. It was anticipated that the next census return would show an improved figure.

Freedom of Information Request

SACRE were informed that a Freedom of Information (FOI) request was received from NASACRE on 10 January 2023. This focussed on SACRE funding and requested specific details relating to the level of funding received, where the funding had been allocated from and where the funding had been spent. There were also some questions relating to membership, the number of meetings that had been held and how many of the meetings were quorate. The response was collated and returned to NASACRE on the 12 January 2023.

RE Quality Mark application - St Luke's Primary School Cannock

SACRE were informed that St Luke's Primary School in Cannock were in the final stages of submitting an application for the RE quality mark. The RE lead was working through the requirements of collecting evidence for the assessment.

Resolved: a. That the report and updates be noted.

b. That it be noted that Councillor Snape would contact the relevant Cabinet Member and Senior Officer on behalf of the SACRE to ask for some clarity on the commission of the RE Advisor.

152. NASACRE Update

The Chair referred to a SACRE briefing that had been received from NASACRE. It was agreed that the briefing would be shared with SACRE members following the meeting.

NASACRE Conference

The SACRE heard that NASACRE would be celebrating its 30th Anniversary at the Annual Conference, to be held on the 22 May 23 at the Fishmongers' Hall in London. The conference would focus on "SACREs for the Future".

The conference would be followed by several workshops that would be held between Monday 5 and Thursday 15 June 23.

Currently there were two spaces available for each SACRE. The Chair would be attending to represent Staffordshire SACRE, but one space was still available. It was agreed that if any SACRE member wished to attend the conference, they would contact the SACRE Clerk.

NASACRE Elections

Elections would take place at the conference to appoint a Vice Chair, and 5 Executive members. This provided an opportunity for SACRE members to offer to contribute their skills and experience to the work of NASACRE if they wished to do so. Each SACRE were able to nominate up to 2 candidates for election.

30-Year Celebration

To mark the 30-year celebration, every SACRE throughout the country was being asked to send in any relevant photographs they hold, which would be used to create a presentation that would be shown at the conference.

NASACRE Awards

As part of the celebrations NASACRE would like to recognise SACRE members who had played a special part in the life of a SACRE over the last 30 years. Nominations (and their reason for being selected) were invited from SACRE's of members, past and present, under the two following categories:

- Most active SACRE member
- A SACRE member who has made a significant impact in your area

White Paper

Members were reminded of the Education Development White Paper that had been issued in 2022, which led to a Schools Bill that was brought before Parliament. It was noted that the government had decided to not proceed with the Schools Bill.

DfE officials suggested that the intention of Government remained that all schools would be part of a Multi-Academy Trust by 2030. Paul Smalley had written an academic journal article that suggested the way in which SACREs would function in the future if the Government's ambitions were fulfilled.

Resolved: a. That the update be noted.

b. That the NASACRE briefing email be shared with SACRE members.

153. Agreed Syllabus update and launch information

SACRE Members were reminded that the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus was last reviewed and issued to schools in 2016. A review process had taken place throughout 2021 and 2022 with the final draft of the AS being accepted by SACRE at the November 2022 SACRE meeting. The agreed version was submitted to Staffordshire County Council (SCC) for approval via the delegated decision process in January 2023. It was confirmed that the Agreed Syllabus was going through the delegated decision process in advance of final approval by the Cabinet Member for Education (SEND). It was explained that, should any queries or questions be raised, there could be a need for the Agreed Syllabus Conference to reconvene to consider them.

The launch of the syllabus had been arranged for Monday 27 February 2023 commencing at 2pm. Entrust had informed schools of the launch event and 78 schools had confirmed that they would attend the launch event.

SACRE were asked what they would like to see included at the launch event. The following comments were made:

- Keynote speech from the Chair and Cabinet Member for Education (SEND).
- Diversity of representative faiths.
- Pupil participation – in person or pre-recorded to be shared as part of a presentation.
- Some evidence of the Westhill Legacy Project – through the MEAS team.

A further discussion took place as to the best way to provide attendees with a copy of the Agreed Syllabus. It was agreed that attendees would receive an electronic copy on a memory stick that would be distributed at the event. It was also agreed that some "paper" copies would be made available for attendees to browse. After the launch event the Agreed Syllabus would be made available to schools via the "ebag" and also via the SACRE webpage on the SCC website.

SACRE Members were asked to inform the SACRE advisor or clerk as to whether they planned to attend the launch event.

Resolved: a. That the update be noted.

b. That Councillor Price be invited to attend the launch event and give a speech.

c. That it be noted that attendees were to be provided with an electronic copy of the Agreed Syllabus.

d. That SACRE Members inform the SACRE advisor or clerk of their intentions to attend the launch event.

154. Reflection on Religion and the 2021 census

SACRE were provided with an update of the statistics relating to religion from the 2021 census. The following figures were discussed:

- The most common response to the religion question in England and Wales was "Christian" (46.2% of the overall population, 27.5 million people). This was the most common religious group in both England (46.3%) and in Wales (43.6%).
- The number of people who described themselves as "Christian" had decreased to less than half the population for the first time. This was a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% in 2011 (33.3 million people) and continued the decrease since 2001, when 71.7% (37.3 million) described themselves as "Christian".
- This coincided with an increase in the number of people reporting "No religion" to 37.2% (22.2 million) in 2021 from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.

It was suggested that there were a number of factors that may contribute to the changing religious composition. These included differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality, and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to answer the religion question between censuses.

Resolved: a. That the update be noted.

155. Resources to support RE

A number of resources that would support the teaching of RE lessons, particularly after the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus, were shared with SACRE. This information would also be shared with at the Agreed Syllabus launch event.

- **Big ideas** – web-based curriculum for religious education
- **Culham St. Gabriel's E-learning Platform** – charity which provides grants to schools to support them in building up resource banks.
- **RE Today and National Association Teachers of Religious Education** – providers of free online resources to schools

- **Early Years resources** – Free curriculum support documents and published resources written by Gill Vaisey, an independent adviser on religion and worldviews specialising in RE for 3 – 7 year olds.
- **Bible stories to support the teaching of Christianity** – Free PowerPoint presentations for ten of the main Bible stories prepared for schools to use.
- **BBC Bitesize** – Religion Road 20 short films from BBC for RE, embedded into Bitesize
- **Oak Academy** – created the first online lesson for any subject related to RE. Free access to initial starter lessons for any subject related to RE

Resolved: a. That the update be noted.

156. The SACRE Budget 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

Members were informed that, of the budget of £6,004.00 that was currently available to the SACRE, the following commitments had been made from the SACRE annual allowance:

- 7 days for Agreed Syllabus work with MEAS team - £3,150.00
- 4 days for AS support and planning - £1,800.00
- Agreed Syllabus Launch - £1,000.00

Resolved: That the SACRE Budget 2022-2023 be noted.

157. Development Plan 2023-24

The Development Plan was presented to the SACRE. The SACRE advisor explained the objectives, activities, and the RAG rating which estimated the success of each objective. It was noted that the majority of actions were now green, with a couple of outstanding actions marked amber. One of these actions related to the launch of the Agreed Syllabus, which would change following the launch event.

It was agreed that a workshop discussion would take place at the next meeting to determine new actions for the 2023 / 2024 timeframe.

Resolved: a. That the Development Plan be noted.

b. That it be noted that a workshop meeting be arranged to take place at the next meeting to determine new actions for the 2023/24 timeframe.

158. Applications for variation of practice

There were no applications made on this occasion.

159. Dates of next meetings

Dates of next meetings - All meetings commence at 2:00pm unless otherwise stated.

- 28 June 2023
- 15 November 2023

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