

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 13 November 2013

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

Mick Dwyer, Sonia Andjelkovic, Diana Cutler, Paul Lewis, Jane Essex, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal (Vice-Chairman), Liz O'Brien, Muhammad Parekh, Rosemary Woodward, Peter Davies, Terry Finn, Liz Williams, Conor Wileman, David Williams and Caroline Wood

Apologies for absence: Barrie Scott, Ann Hewetson, Tajinder Singh, Dr Laow, Sam Phillips, Sue Blackmore, Colin Hopkins and Tricia Budd

Also in attendance - Emma Jardine and Helen Phillips

PART ONE

1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Nominations had been received for Rev Preb Michael Metcalf and Hifsa Haroon Iqbal to be elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively. No further nominations were received and it was:

RESOLVED – That Rev Preb Michael Metcalf and Hifsa Haroon Iqbal be elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively for the ensuing year.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 July 2013

RESOLVED – That, with the addition of Sue Blackmore's apologies, the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 10 July 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. RE in Staffordshire: an overview for new SACRE members

SACRE received a presentation from Emma Jardine, Senior Teacher Consultant for Religious Education, on the importance of RE in the curriculum and what "good" RE looks like.

Members received a copy of the current Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus, with its overarching aim of developing "religiously educated" young people. Members were shown the web pages that support the agreed syllabus, giving details on, for example, topics for RE and suggested delivery. The web pages were still currently on the Staffordshire Learning Net but were in the process of being moved to the Entrust run site.

There was a need to address the academy and free school teaching of RE in any future syllabus.

Members discussed the right of withdrawal from RE lessons, seeking clarification on the reasons for this. Any such requests within Staffordshire were very infrequent. Historically some religious groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, had sought to withdraw their young people from RE lessons. Members felt that gaining an understanding of different religions and religious perspectives was positive, to be encouraged, and were concerned at withdrawal from RE lessons. However Members were clear about the legal position and the rights of parents to withdraw their children.

SACRE were pleased to note that RE teacher training places were being newly introduced at Keele University from next year, which was a positive start towards recognising the importance of teaching RE.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

4. Update on Key Issues

SACRE received an update on key issues that had developed or arisen since their last meeting. These included:

- a) the SACRE Awards, listing the award recipients and the success of the ceremony held on 10 July;
- b) the SACRE lecture led by RE consultant Gill Vaisey who gave an interactive evening on RE for Early Years that had been very well received; and
- c) the success of the SACRE funded network meetings.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be noted.

5. Examination Results

SACRE had been due to receive a statistical analysis of the Staffordshire RE examination results, however the results had only recently been made available and therefore more time was needed for their analysis.

Once the analysis had been completed it would be circulated to SACRE for information prior to being included on the next SACRE agenda.

RESOLVED – That an analysis of the examination results be circulated once available and that this be included on the next SACRE agenda for discussion.

6. SACRE Annual Report Approval

SACRE is required to produce an annual report of its work. The report is distributed to Staffordshire schools, teacher associations and local faith communities and is published on the Staffordshire Learning Net.

SACRE received a draft copy of the 2012-13 annual report for consideration and were asked to forward any comments/amendments to Emma Jardine by the end on November.

RESOLVED – That any comments on the draft Annual Report be forwarded to Emma Jardine by the end of November.

7. The Ofsted Long Report on RE

In October 2013 Ofsted released its long report on RE entitled “Religious Education: realising the potential”. The report looked at religious education in schools, setting out eight key challenges around:

1. low standards
2. weaknesses in teaching
3. curriculum problems
4. a confused sense of purpose
5. limitations in leadership and management
6. weaknesses in examination provision at Key Stage (KS) 4
7. gaps in training, and
8. the impact of recent education policy changes on RE in schools.

The report also looked at how to learn from best practice, placing enquiry at the heart of learning, looking at leadership and management in both primary and secondary schools and effective RE in special schools.

The report had been well received and Members were pleased to note that this seemed to have raised the profile of RE.

RESOLVED – That the Ofsted Long Report on RE be noted.

8. Agreed Syllabus Review

The Education Act 1993 required the Local Authority to institute a review of its locally agreed syllabus every five years. The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus was last reviewed and issued to schools in 2009. A review was therefore due in 2014.

It is for the Local Authority to convene an agreed syllabus conference for the purposes of reviewing the syllabus, however SACRE can request a review by writing to the LA.

Members received a copy of Circular 1/94 which detailed the composition of the SACRE conference.

The new National Non Statutory Framework for RE had very recently been made available and any syllabus review would need to take account of the framework. SACRE were aware that this was a time of transition and change and therefore any review would be complex. Members noted that Solihull SACRE had agreed to postpone their syllabus review in order to have more time to consider the new framework.

It was proposed that SACRE consider writing to the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, asking him to set up an agreed syllabus conference to review the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus. Having voted the Committees agreed that the Clerk should write to the Cabinet Member, making this request on their behalf.

RESOLVED – That the Clerk write to the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, requesting that he consider setting up an Agreed Syllabus Conference to review the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus.

9. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave an update on recent NASACRE developments, including changes to the NASACRE website, with parts of the site now password protected and only available to view by those SACRE who had paid their NASACRE subscriptions. Staffordshire SACRE was one of the 142 SACREs that had paid their subscriptions and Members had previously been sent login and password details to enable them to access the information. The web site included details on the following issues:

- a) a briefing on the National Non Statutory Framework and strategic review of RE;
- b) advice following the tragic Woolwich incident;
- c) briefing papers for governors;
- d) details on a early day motion on RE and tolerance;
- e) a SACRE evaluation and reporting toolkit, which Staffordshire could use at a future meeting to evaluate their work; and
- f) planning for the next Annual General Meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

10. Applications for Variation of Practice

There were none at this meeting.

11. SACRE Budget 2013-2014

Members received a breakdown of the SACRE budget for the financial year 2013-14 and noted the remaining funds.

At their meeting of 10 July 2013 Members had suggested supporting one school per year to apply for the RE Quality Mark (REQM). This would cost £450.00 and Members suggested that schools be invited to apply for this support.

SACRE agreed that this financial support should not be offered to Academy schools.

Mary Gale, who had been the head teacher of St Michael's CE VC First School, Stone, when they became the first Staffordshire school to receive a REQM, would be talking to schools through the networking sessions about the successful application. It was hoped that this would promote the award and encourage other Staffordshire schools to consider applying.

RESOLVED – That a) the report be received; and,
b) schools be made aware of the SACRE offer of financial support for one non academy Staffordshire school to apply for the REQM.

12. AOB

1. Liz O'Brien and Jane Essex agreed to produce an application for the NASACRE Westhill award. The project would be around a platform linking data and research for teaching RE to pupils with different ways of learning because of their special needs. The project would also include some sample practical resources and could also include mainstream provision for young people with autism, particularly in developing empathy through RE.
2. Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal informed SACRE of the Stafford and District Friends of Faith Interfaith event on Tuesday 19 November, 5.30pm, where the Sydney Morris award would be presented, and the Explore Islam Exhibition on 25-29 November. Please let Hifsa know if SACRE members would like to attend either of these events.
3. Diana Cutler highlighted a paper produced by the Coalition Government on respecting marriage in schools, a guide for teachers in England and Wales. This document would be circulated after the meeting for members information and comment.
4. Paul Lewis had been contacted by a friend who was a Religious Leader from a Druze community in Galilee looking for a school or community to develop a student exchange programme with and asked that schools and groups be made aware of this opportunity.

Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Chairman

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.