

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 9 February 2015

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

Susan Devereux, Ann Hewetson, Diana Cutler, Dr Laow Panyasiri, Muhammad Parekh, Sue Blackmore, Rosemary Woodward, Terry Finn, David Williams, Caroline Wood and Bill Walley

Apologies for absence: Sam Kirwan, Mick Dwyer, Sonia Andjelkovic, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Colin Hopkins and Peter Davies

Also in attendance - Helen Phillips, Emma Jardine and Mary Gale

PART ONE

13. Declaration of Any other Business

There were none on this occasion.

14. Minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 12 November 2014

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of Cllr Caroline Wood in the list of apologies for absence, the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 12 November 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Members noted that Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal had been contacted after the 12 November meeting and had agreed to stand as the SACRE Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

15. An Update on Key Issues

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

- a) Emma Jardine, Consultant to Staffordshire SACRE, would be going on maternity leave from April 2015. Mary Gale would be covering this role in Emma's absence. Mary had previously been a member of Staffordshire SACRE;
- b) Lord Nash, Minister responsible for faith schools, had sent a letter to all SACRE Chairmen, Clerks and Directors of Education emphasising the importance of good teaching of RE and Members received a copy of this letter;
- c) NASACRE had issued a statement in response to the Charlie Hebdo murders in Paris, Members received a copy of the statement;
- d) The Department for Education (DfE) had released official guidance on promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development in schools; and,
- e) Following attendance at the spirited arts course led by Emma Jardine, schools within the Biddulph Schools Partnership Trust were embarking on a spirited arts

week starting on 9 February 2015. SACRE Members were pleased to note this initiative.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be noted.

16. Agreed Syllabus Review

SACRE noted the minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on 12 November 2014.

It was proposed that SACRE convene a meeting of their Agreed Syllabus Conference.

RESOLVED – That SACRE convene the second meeting of their Agreed Syllabus Conference.

[Note by Clerk: The SACRE meeting was formally closed whilst the Agreed Syllabus Conference was convened. Once the Agreed Syllabus Conference had concluded the SACRE meeting formally re-opened.]

17. DfE Guidance on Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in Schools

On 27 November 2014 the DfE published guidance on promoting British values in schools to ensure young people left school prepared for life in modern Britain. The guidance aimed to help both independent and state-maintained schools understand their responsibilities on this issue, having a duty to “actively promote” the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. These values had first been set out by the Government in the “Prevent” strategy in 2011. Previously schools had been required to “respect” these values, but must now have a clear strategy for embedding these values and show how their work with pupils had been effective. The changes were designed to tighten up standards on pupil welfare to improve safeguarding whilst strengthening barriers to extremism through the standards on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Members received a copy of the guidance. The guidance was useful and Members felt that further discussion around this issue would be helpful, proposing that Chris Sharkey, Senior Teacher Consultant Minority Ethnic Achievement, be invited to their next SACRE meeting to contribute to these discussions.

RESOLVED – That: a) SACRE note with interest the guidance given by the Government; and
b) Chris Sharkey be invited to attend the next SACRE meeting to discuss the work being undertaken in Staffordshire on promoting fundamental British values as part of SMCS in schools.

18. An Analysis of Examination Results 2014

SACRE received a statistical analysis of their standards achieved in GCSE (full course), Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies by pupils examined in the summer of 2014. The key issues identified from the analysis were:

- a) In 2014 entries for GCSE Full Course rose sharply, whilst there were no entries for the GCSE Short Course. Since 2012 there had been an increase of 2233 entries for full course GCSE, which reflected the national changes in the examination system and the de-valuing of the short course;
- b) It was positive that entries overall had not declined and that examination and accreditation was still favoured at Key Stage 4 (KS4). The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus recommended that students at KS4 study an approved examination syllabus, and these findings showed that the majority of schools were compliant;
- c) Standards achieved at GCSE in Staffordshire had declined. This decline may reflect the change to the full course from the short course, with some schools taking the full course for the first time. There may also be staffing pressures in schools and teaching time may be another pressure;
- d) Overall 58 students across 19 schools were entered for AS level and 162 students across 23 schools were entered for A level at the end of KS5. There was a small drop in the number of entries at both AS and A level; and,
- e) This year Staffordshire attainment at the higher grades A-B was slightly below the national average for GCSE, As and A level.

SACRE felt that this year they wished to congratulate those schools who had a high percentage of pupils gaining above national average grades whilst also having a large number of pupils taking the course.

RESOLVED – That Emma Jardine, on SACRE’s behalf, writes a letter of congratulations to those schools with high exam pupil entries and above national average results.

19. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave an update on recent NASACRE events, including:

- NASACRE and AREIAC had held a joint conference in Birmingham on the Trojan Horse incident. This had been fully subscribed and very useful. This approach may set the pattern for future conference support;
- NASACRE had responded to the letter from Lord Nash. The response was expected to be included on the next SACRE briefing, circulated to Members;
- It seemed likely that the Government would find the funding to enable an analysis of SACRE Annual Reports to be undertaken;
- NASACRE were producing guidance for SACRE annual reports, including a standard template, which would be available on the public section of their website;
- NASACRE had produced a prompt statement in response to the Charlie Hebdo incident, which had been widely appreciated;
- A survey of SACREs had been carried out recently by David Hampshire. This had received a good response. Part of the issue for SACREs now was a level of uncertainty over how local authorities continue to support them;
- The NASACRE AGM would be held on 21 May 2015, in Birmingham, and Members were asked to inform the Chairman and /or Clerk if they would like to attend;

- NASACRE were reviewing their constitution to try and rationalise it to avoid duplication; and
- Further work would be available to SACREs on line for reviewing training to ensure SACREs are effective.

RESOLVED – That the oral update by the Chairman be noted.

20. Application for Variation of Practice

There were none on this occasion.

21. SACRE Budget

SACRE received a breakdown of their budget for the financial year 2014-2015.

RESOLVED – That the budget breakdown be noted.

22. AOB

Dr Laow Panyasiri informed SACRE Members that they were organising a Children's Day at the Buddhist Temple in Kings Bromley on 1 August 2015 and SACRE Members were welcome. The Chairman asked that details of this event be sent to the Chairman or Clerk for circulation to all SACRE Members.

**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.