

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 10 February 2016

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

Margaret Crossland, Sam Kirwan, Julie Thompson (Co-Optee), Susan Devereux, Sonia Andjelkovic, Diana Cutler, Muhammad Parekh, Sue Blackmore, Rosemary Woodward, Peter Davies, Terry Finn, David Williams, Caroline Wood and Ian Lawson

Apologies for absence: Paul Moseley, Mick Dwyer, Dr Laow Panyasiri, Sam Phillips, Colin Hopkins and Mrs J Grundy

Also in attendance - Helen Phillips and Mary Gale

PART ONE

26. Minutes of the SACRE Meeting held on 11 November 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 11 November 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

27. An Update on Key Issues

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

- a) an update on maternity cover for the RE Consultant, with Mary Gale continuing to cover this varied work, and Emma Jardine expected to return in April;
- b) changes to GCSE regulations, with pupils commencing their GCSEs from September 2016 being assessed on a scale of 1-9. Concern was shared at the delay in Ofcom approving the new RE exam syllabus for each exam board and the impact this would have on schools nationally;
- c) queries concerning the Agreed Syllabus, specifically that it is past its review date. Schools have been advised to continue using the old syllabus for now;
- d) a number of important reports have been published recently. These are addressed later on the agenda; and
- e) the SACRE Annual Report has been completed and had been sent out to schools via the electronic school bag or “ebag”.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be received.

28. Agreed Syllabus Conference Review Update

SACRE noted the work that had been undertaken since their November 2015 meeting in relation to re-writing the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus and the discussions of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held prior to the start of this SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED – That the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference be noted.

29. Analysis of Examination Results

SACRE received a statistical analysis of the standards achieved in GCSE (full course), Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies by pupils examined in the summer of 2015. Overall the number of entries for GCSE full course had risen. There were now 2441 more entries for the full GCSE course than in 2012. Schools should no longer be entering pupils for the GCSE short course, reflecting the changes nationally in the examination system's move away from short courses.

The Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus recommended that students at KS4 should study an approved examination syllabus and these findings showed that the vast majority of schools complied with this. Standards at GCSE had declined slightly, reflecting the national picture.

Overall 445 students across 27 schools had been entered for AS level and 333 Students across 25 schools had been entered for A level at the end of Key Stage 5. This reflects a substantial increase at both AS and A level.

SACRE requested that letters of congratulations be sent to those schools entering a more than 50% of their pupils in GCSE RE examination courses who achieved above the national average results for those achieving A*-C grades. Letters should also be sent to those high achieving schools at A and AS level.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) The report be received; and
- b) Letters of congratulations be sent to the specific schools identified by SACRE.

30. Recommendations of Recent Publications as advised by NASACRE

In 2015 a number of significant reports were published in connection with religious education, collective worship, SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences. SACRE received information compiled by David Hampshire, Chairman of NASACRE, which brought together proposals from these reports and outlined the judgement of Mr Justice Warby in relation to the Secretary of State's position regarding non-religious worldviews as part of GCSE Religious Studies.

SACRE received information on:

- a) "A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools" – report (previously discussed at SACRE) of Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead;
- b) "Living with Difference: community, diversity and the common good" – report of the Woolf Institute/ Rt Hon Baroness Butler-Sloss;
- c) "RE for Real" project – developed at Goldsmith's, University of London, under the supervision of Professor Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw;
- d) "Will GCSE Religious Studies as proposed by the Government, meet the requirements to religiously educate pupils at KS4?" The Judicial Review of Mr Justice Warby; and
- e) C) NASACRE's response "Common Themes: uncommon Solutions".

This was an exciting time for RE and Members were encouraged to explore the NASACRE website where details of these publications were available.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations outlined in these reports be noted.

31. Application for Membership of SACRE from the Spiritualists' National Union

SACRE had received a request from representatives of the Spiritualists National Union to become a SACRE member. Prior to the start of this SACRE meeting Mrs Julia Almond had spoken to SACRE Members about Spiritualism today and answered their questions.

SACRE now considered offering the opportunity for a Spiritualist representative to have a co-opted place on SACRE. They discussed this proposal within their individual committees and then formally voted on whether they wished to co-opt a member of the National Spiritualist Union onto SACRE. Each Committee voted in favour of the proposal and the SACRE will therefore seek endorsement for the proposal from the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills.

RESOLVED – That SACRE seek endorsement from the Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, to offer a co-opted place on the Staffordshire SACRE to the Spiritualist National Union.

32. NASACRE Update

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

- The NASACRE AGM and Conference was scheduled for 17 May. Adam Denham from Goldsmiths and Baroness Butler-Sloss were guest speakers at the event, with Nicky Morgan also likely to attend. The event was to be held in Central Hall, Westminster; and,
- Charles Clarke had agreed to become NASACRE's patron.

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

33. Application for Variation of Practice

There were none on this occasion.

34. SACRE Budget

SACRE received a breakdown of the current SACRE budget for the financial year 2015-16. The remaining monies would be used for consultancy work on the Agreed Syllabus.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

35. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – That the next SACRE meeting is held on 6 July 2016, 2.00pm, Kingston Centre, Stafford.

**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.