

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 19 June 2019

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

Linda Goodwin, Ian Lawson, Syed Hussain, Judy Wyman, Gabi Oldfield and Lydia Bartlett

Apologies for absence: Julie Thompson, Diana Cutler, Sam Phillips, Mark Sutton and Shaurn Miles

Also in attendance – Mary Gale and Mandy Pattinson

PART ONE

27. Welcome to New Members

The Chairman welcomed Mary Gale back to work after her recent accident whilst on holiday in France.

28. Declaration of Any Other Business

No declarations were raised.

29. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 6 February 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on the 6 February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. An Update on Key Issues

SACRE considered the report which covered the main issues affecting Religious Education (RE) since the last meeting. Further to the report, the following information was provided:

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) had continued with five to six people attending the events.

Mary Gale had attended the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) in June to update them on the work of SACRE. The JAC was part of the Trade Unions negotiation and consultation group. Its aim was to look at issues such as educational standards and the support offered to partner organisations. The JAC had thanked Mary for attending the meeting and the information provided at the meeting would be used to support schools appropriately.

The NATRE 'Strictly RE' conference had been attended in January 2019 by Mary Gale. A member of SACRE asked who had funded the event and if it was biased towards a particular religion. In response, members were informed that the organisation was funded from several sources predominantly the Church of England. During events such as the NATRE conferences debates on what constituted good RE is was encouraged. There was no bias towards a particular religion or faith. Members were reminded that schools can bid for additional external funding from NATRE and additional RE funding sources and this was normally publicised by Mary Gale through the school e-bag or the termly Governor Information Pack.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

31. An Update on NASACRE

The Chairman informed SACRE that he and the Advisor, Mary Gale, had attended the NASACRE national conference in Manchester on 22 May 2019. The title of the conference was Cohesive Communities and Effective Partnerships. NASACRE is the national body of SACREs which discusses both national and local issues of importance to RE.

There had been two main speakers:

1. Peter Bull, Head of RE at Alsop High School, Liverpool who had started the 'Beacon of Hope' initiative. The aim of the project was to raise expectations and ambitions of the pupils and encourage them to make a difference and build communities throughout Liverpool. Examples were given, such as remembering the holocaust and the impact on the Jewish community, Justice days and Young Leaders awards.
2. Professor Julian Stern from St John's University York presented his theory on the teaching methods of RE entitled "Uncertainty and mortality, the two stubborn particulars of RE for cohesive communities".

There was a discussion on how the learning and experiences of the two speakers could be shared through our the local schools. It was felt that SACRE could act as a link and pass on the information. The NASACRE website would shortly include a report on the event including links which could be forwarded to schools in the Autumn Governor Information Pack.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That links to the NASACRE annual conference and the speaker's material be included in the next information pack sent to schools.

32. The new Ofsted Education Framework - implications for the teaching of Religious Education

Ofsted had recently published its new education inspection framework (EIF) along with an inspection handbook which would come into operation in September 2019. There would now be greater emphasis on a broad and balanced curriculum.

Attached to the report was a letter from the Department for Education to the Chairman of NASACRE and a summary of the main changes to the inspection framework and the implications for schools in relation to RE.

SACRE were reminded that currently RE is not usually highlighted in the Ofsted inspection. However, from September 2019 inspectors would be able to choose up to four areas to carry out 'deep dive' inspections, RE could be one of these.

The school workforce census currently collects information on the number of hours a subject is taught per week, this includes RE. In future, from September 2019 this information will help to identify the time spent in schools, on teaching RE and could therefore provide some useful data. NATRE would be paying particular attention to this information.

Members felt that it was encouraging that Ofsted had raised the status of RE and was giving it due consideration. It would be interesting to see how often RE was chosen as a 'deep dive'.

Members took part in an interactive group activity where set responses to the question 'Why do we teach RE?' were ranked according to group discussion and preference.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

33. Extension of Committee A - to include a representative of the Baha'i faith

SACRE considered a request from the Baha'i community to become a member of the Council. The Baha'i faith currently had a co-opted role on SACRE.

Members were informed that it was for the Local Authority to agree the membership of the group based on SACREs recommendation.

Representatives from each of SACREs four Committees were present at the meeting and voted on the Chairman's proposal to extend the membership.

RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder for Learning and Employability be requested to approve the extension to the SACRE membership to include Baha'i faith.

34. Update on the Explore-Engage-Reflect legacy, Westhill/NASACRE Project

SACRE were reminded that at previous meetings, the success of the project had been reported and it had been agreed to use any surplus budget to extend the project, offering the experience to more schools. 15 schools and over 800 pupils had now taken part in the project and the feedback had been overwhelmingly positive from both staff and pupils.

It was reported that the remaining budget, from the original Westhill grant had been carried forward into this financial year's budget and SACRE were asked if they felt that this project should be further extended. It was felt that the project had been such a success that it should continue, and that it should be discussed further under the budget report, later on the agenda.

Members asked if the project had received any local publicity as a result of the activities. Mary Gale agreed to ask the schools and feedback to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That schools who had taken part in the Westhill/NASACRE project be asked if they had received any press coverage as a result of the project.

35. Monitoring Provision - An analysis of the survey to Schools on RE and Collective Worship

SACRE received a report containing the results of a survey on Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools in Staffordshire.

The survey had been sent to all schools in the County via the e-bag at the start of the Summer term (2019). 33 Primary schools and seven High schools had replied. The low level of response was disappointing, and members felt that it would be interesting to see if RE gained in importance now that it was to be highlighted in the revised Ofsted inspection framework. Different ways of encouraging future responses to the survey should be considered prior to it being sent out next year.

It was thought to be reassuring that 31 of the 33 Primaries and four of the seven High schools use the agreed syllabus to plan and support their lesson structure.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That different ways of improving the response rate be considered prior to next year's survey.

36. AREIAC's response to Commission on Religious Education's Report - Religion and World Views: The Way Forward and the REC response to the Government - December 2018

The SACRE considered the response of the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants (AREIAC) to the Commission on RE, 'Religion and World Views: The Way Forward – A National Plan for RE'. The Commission's report was considered by SACRE at the previous meeting.

It was noted that the response focused on the structure and process surrounding the teaching and resourcing through an appropriate RE syllabus. It was clear that in AREIAC's opinion, if the report was "properly resourced and collaboratively developed, it provides a good way forward for RE".

The Chairman informed members that he had written a paper on the 'History of SACRE' from the point of view of the Church of England. A link to the paper would be forwarded.

RESOLVED: That the Commission's report, "Religion and World Views: The Way Forward – A National Plan for RE", be reconsidered at the next meeting as a reminder to its main purpose and its recommendations.

37. Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE

SACRE considered the updated Church of England's (CoE) Statement of Entitlement for RE which would be used to support SIAMS inspections of CoE schools from Summer 2019.

Members were encouraged to see that the statement was in line with the Ofsted inspection framework and shared a lot of similarities with the local syllabus.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

38. Current Budget 2018/19 and Proposed New Budget 2019/20

SACRE were advised of the end of financial year budget position for 2018-19 and the current budget for this financial year 2019-20.

Members were informed that following discussions with the Local Authority, the Westhill endowment of £2,725 had been rolled forward into this financial year, therefore providing more opportunities to continue the work of the project. It was felt that the project should be extended to a further two schools, one of which should be in the Burton area. This item had been discussed earlier on the agenda.

It was explained that in future, in line with the Local Authorities normal accounting processes, any unspent funds would be clawed back and not carried forward into the next financial year. The Westhill project fund had been an exception this year as it was specifically for SACRE to provide training opportunities and was therefore exempt from these rules.

It was noted that the budget for 2019/20 appeared to be significantly lower than that of previous years and members asked if this amount covered the contributions made to Entrust for Mary Gale's services.

SACRE felt that unspent funding should not be clawed back by the Local Authority and Mary Gale was requested to clarify this position and to establish if the Entrust funding had already been deducted from the budget.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That the Westhill funding be used to continue the work of the project to schools as discussed under the previous report.
- c) That the SACRE advisor request clarification on the 2019/20 budget and the reason for the clawback of funding.

39. Application for Variation of Practice

There were none on this occasion.

40. Date of Future Meetings

RESOLVED: That the following dates for future meetings be approved:

Wednesday 6 November 2019
Wednesday 5 February 2020
Wednesday 24 June 2020
Wednesday 18 November 2020

It was noted that the dates of the February, June and November dates were incorrectly labelled as 2019.

All meetings would be held at 2.00pm, in the White Room, County Building, Stafford, ST16 3AD unless otherwise stated.

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