

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 18 November 2020

Present: Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf (Chairman)

Mohamed Sedky, Linda Goodwin, Julie Thompson, Sam Kirwan, Mohamed Parekh, Sam Phillips, Ian Lawson, Lauren Nicholson Ward, Mark Sutton, Syed Hussain, Judy Wyman, Vickie Longson, Bob Spencer, Shaun Miles and Kyle Robinson

Apologies for absence: Tajinder Singh, Gabi Oldfield and Lydia Bartlett

Also in attendance – Mary Gale (SACRE advisor) Mandy Pattinson (Clerk) and Chris Giles - Regional Ambassador for National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE).

PART ONE

68. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

RESOLVED:

- a) The Rev. Preb. Michael Metcalf was appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year.
- b) Lauren Nicholson-Ward was appointed as Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

69. Welcome to new members (if any)

It was reported that since the agenda had been published, Diana Cutler had resigned from the group. A new representative for the Free Churches would be sought. The Chairman thanked Diana for her contribution whilst on the Committee.

70. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 5 February 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 5 February 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted the last scheduled meeting, arranged for June 2020 had been cancelled due to Covid-19 lockdown arrangements.

71. An Update on Key Issues including Covid-19 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 Westhill project would continue when appropriate, despite having been paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was hoped that the funding could be ringfenced into next year's budget.
- Mary Gale had continued to provide support for schools, particularly around diversity and race relations by providing information on Black History month, on the Holocaust Educational Trust learning support tool and Interfaith support.

- Emphasis had been put on the schools embedding all such aspects in all that they do, not just during the national awareness periods.
- The Agreed Syllabus was due to be reviewed in Spring 2021.
- There had been no reduction in the level of support available during the Covid-19 period.

Following a discussion on the syllabus, members were informed that Staffordshire's was available on the Entrust web site. It was agreed that a copy would be sent to members for information.

It was explained that in this update the term 'bureaucratic' had been used to describe the systems around reporting racial incidents where more time could be spent filling in forms and recording incidents than dealing with the situation. Following a question on whether we offer enough support to schools to help them tackle racism, it was explained that, other than training, there was little more SACRE could do other than provide support and direct to appropriate resources and websites.

Chris Giles, regional ambassador for the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) joined the meeting to discuss the development of a West Midlands Hub for Teachers/SACRE's and professionals. The Hub would provide information and advice on, amongst other things:

- Information on places of worship in Staffordshire
- National/local and regional events
- Local group meetings and university resource centres

Chris Giles was advised that information on the availability of places of worship for visits by schools was not always easy to compile due to a number of factors eg contact details changing and ensuring that information provided complied with GDPR and DBS regulations. It was confirmed that NATRE would check that the groups and individuals had been DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked prior to recommendation. The Chair pointed out that in Staffordshire 95% of faith groups are within the Christian tradition.

The Vice Chair, Lauren Nicholson Ward, reported that her school was looking to build up a contact and resource list which may be of use for other schools, and this information could be shared with NATRE.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report was noted.
- b) That a copy of the current syllabus be sent to the members of SACRE for information
- c) The advisory officer ensures that there is a copy on the Entrust website.
- d) Mr Giles was thanked for attending the meeting and the Advisory officer's and Vice Chair's details would be shared with him to enable further discussion.

72. NASACRE Update

The Chairman informed SACRE that the previous Chair of NASACRE had resigned earlier in the year and withdrawn from the RE world. The Vice Chair, Linda Rudge, had

subsequently taken over the role. The AGM scheduled for May 2020 had been cancelled due to the pandemic.

An Extra Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) had been held on 17 November 2020 and the Vice Chair formally appointed as Chair. There was now a vacancy for a Vice Chair.

Regarding the post of Treasurer, Rev Metcalf had been reappointed for another term of office, along with a Shadow Treasure to work alongside him to support succession planning.

Two presentations had been received at the EGM from Cumbria and Lewisham. The Cumbria presentation centred on developing treasure chests of holy writing and the Lewisham presentation centred on developing a faith trail. Both presentations can be accessed through the NASACRE website.

NASACRE main areas of activity were currently:

- They were using the Freedom of Information (FOI) act to enquire how much support Local Authorities were giving to SACREs across the country. Results will be published and circulated when available. Members were informed that Staffordshire's FOI request has been completed and returned.
- Supporting a pilot project about developing local RE and further exploration of the publication "RE and World Views". Work had started to develop thinking around this and the implications of delivering RE in schools.
- A substantial paper was being prepared by the Religious Education Council (REC) looking at mapping out the future of school collective worship.
- A discussion was underway on "Who owns the Agreed Syllabus (AS)?" and should the public have access to it? This issue had arisen because a good number of SACREs are "buying in" professional expertise, notably from RE Today, when drawing up a new Agreed Syllabus, and such agencies have a commercial interest in restricting access to their material. A possible outcome could be that in future the outline AS to be available for all, but schemes of work and detail could be subject to copywrite.

RESOLVED: The report was noted.

73. SACRE Annual Report for 2019-20

The draft Annual Report had been distributed to SACRE members. Subject to SACRE's approval and final editing, the report would be distributed electronically to NASACRE and headteachers of all schools in the county and would also be available to teacher associations and local faith communities via the Entrust website.

The Members noted that the draft report contained information on the analysis of the survey results on the provision of RE and Collective Worship in schools which SACRE would have normally considered at their June 2020 meeting but due to Covid-19 and the meeting being cancelled, this had not been possible.

It was noted that twice as many primary schools had responded to the survey this year compared to last, but only five secondary schools (out of 10 maintained schools) had responded.

It was felt that as this was such a small number, the use of percentages in the report was not appropriate and could be misleading. These percentages would be removed from this report. In future, it was requested that percentages should only be used when more than 50 responses had been received.

Members were informed and asked to note that the 2019-20 exam results would not be included in next year's report as there had been considerable confusion over the results for 2020. Results had been allocated on central assessed grades, teacher assessments and predicted grades which were not comparable to previous year results.

Members were requested to read the annual report and make any suggestions or amendments to the clerk by 2 December 2020.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the 2019-20 Annual Report be approved, subject to final editing.
- b) That percentages in the secondary schools' responses be taken out.
- c) That in future, percentages should only be used when more than 50 responses had been received.

74. Monitoring of schools - An analysis of the survey to schools on RE and Collective worship

The report summarised the results of the survey that had been circulated to all maintained schools in the county. Questions had been similar to previous years with the addition of extra questions requiring schools to evaluate how effective RE is in general, leadership in RE and the contribution of RE to Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural education (SMSC).

The results had been split into primary and secondary schools responses. The main points raised were: Staff/teacher confidence remained high; varied types of worship are dependent on the size of school; and that there were a number of non-specialist teachers/support staff teaching RE which can prove to be challenge. It was reported that Mary Gale had offered virtual specialist training to schools during the Covid-19 period, but no school had taken up the offer.

Lauren Nicholson Ward informed SACRE that she was working on a collective worship project to collect information, resources, contacts etc in one place to help to support primary schools. SACRE requested that Mary work with Lauren on the project and help to promote to all schools.

Following a question on whether there was any national best practice to support schools address the gender differences or levels of social deprivation which can affect RE attainment, it was reported that there were many reports on these areas nationally but not specifically written about RE. Members were informed that Mary was due to deliver a webinar on 'closing the gap due to Covid-19' for Staffordshire schools, this webinar had already been delivered to a school outside of Staffordshire and had been well received.

It was suggested that universities could be supported to provide extra training to post-graduates, specifically on RE, before they finish their teaching degrees.

Mary Gale agreed to contact local universities to find out what was currently provided and whether any additional was support required.

When discussing Teaching Assistants in primary schools, it was suggested that more could be done to support and train them to deliver the curriculum.

RESOLVED:

- a) The report was noted.
- b) Local Universities be contacted to find out what support was provided to post-graduate students specifically on RE and whether any additional was support required.
- c) Entrust be requested to set up a course for Teaching Assistants support them delivering RE.

75. Update on the Westhill/NASACRE legacy project- Explore-Engage- Reflect

It was reported that work with Youthnet and the MEAS Team had continued into the new financial year, however due to Covid-19 and lockdown in March 2020 delivery of events had stopped. Prior to this the events held at Rising Brook Baptist Church had been well attended and worthwhile.

The future of the project was discussed further in the budget report (next item on the agenda).

RESOLVED: The report was noted.

76. The SACRE Budget 2019-20 and 2020-21

The 2019-20 budget is now closed and money that could have been spent on school support and provision of resources was not spent due to Covid-19. Mary Gale had been informed by email by the LA finance representative that the budget was now closed and that this money could not be carried forward. Julie Wyman queried this and informed the meeting that she would investigate the issue of the carry forward.

The new budget for 2020-21 is set at £6,160 and to date the full amount remained. This was due to the pandemic and no services being required or paid for. The funding for Mary Gale as advisor to SACRE was part of the Entrust contract and not included in the budget.

The budget would be used to support the continuing of the Westhill legacy project as appropriate.

Members suggested that funding could also be spent on supporting Mary Gale and Lauren Nicholson Ward to prepare collective worship packs during the spring term, which would be available to primary schools. It was agreed that Mary Gale would write to the Assistant Director of Education Strategy, Learning and Skills to outline the proposed work and expenditure and gain authority to proceed.

It was also suggested that Mary write to a selection of schools to ask what support for specific focus projects they require which could be provided before the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED:

- a) The report was noted.
- b) Mary Gale write to the Assistant Director of Education Strategy, Learning and Skills to outline the proposed work and expenditure to prepare and supply collective worship packs for primary schools and gain authority to use budget funding for the activity.
- c) Mary Gale to contact schools to ask what support they require for specific focus projects which could be provided before the end of the financial year.
- d) Mary Gale write to the Assistant Director of Education Strategy, Learning and Skills to outline the proposed work and gain authority to use budget funding for the specific focus projects.
- e) Julie Wyman would investigate the issue of the carry forward of the budget.

77. Applications for variation of practice

There were none on this occasion.

78. Date of future meetings

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

Wednesday, 3 February 2021

Wednesday, 30 June 2021

Wednesday, 17 November 2021

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