

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 15 February 2011

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

Christine Chadwick, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Karen Knobbs, Muhammad Parekh, Sam Phillips, Sue Blackmore, Peter Davies, Veronica Downes, Terry Finn, Frankie Durairatnam and Liz Williams

Apologies for absence: Sydney Morris, Liz O'Brien, Mary Gale, Colin Hopkins, Rosemary Woodward, Dave Lyons, Ivan Jennings and Liz Staples

Also in attendance -

PART ONE

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of Liz Williams as having been present, the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

2. The New Education Bill

The Chairman informed SACRE that, following a number of enquiries from schools, he had written on behalf of the Staffordshire SACRE to all headteachers in connection with the teaching of RE and the proposed English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Members received a copy of the Chairman's letter which referred to the impact on the secondary curriculum of the Schools White Paper 2010 "The Importance of Teaching".

The letter reminded schools of a pupils RE entitlement, specifically at Key Stage (KS) 4 and, whilst appreciating each schools dilemma, emphasised the need not to subvert RE teaching expertise to other subject areas and pointed out the importance of being religiously literate.

Members shared the Chairman's concern and supported the action he had taken. SACRE members were urged to take every opportunity to act as advocates for RE.

RESOLVED – That SACRE supports the Chairman's action.

3. An Update on Key Issues

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

- i. Letters of congratulation had been sent to schools on their GCSE and A level results;

- ii. Letters to academies had not yet been sent out;
- iii. The Student Council for Religious Education (the Council had already had their first meeting which was successful, their second meeting would be visiting Hindu and Sikh temples in Wolverhampton);
- iv. Farmington fellows (Jan Young from Queens Croft High School, Lichfield had agreed to share her fellowship work at a special schools network meeting. Her work had explored effective strategies for facilitating visits to faith buildings for children with special educational needs);
- v. The Best of British Islam offer; and,
- vi. Resignation of Rummy Bajaj (the Chairman asked that a card expressing SACRE's thanks and best wishes be sent).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

4. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave an oral update on recent NASACRE developments, including;

- i. Involvement in discussions over the future of RE with schools and the Government;
- ii. NASACRE conference in Birmingham on 31 March 2011 entitled "Whose RE is it anyway" for which there would be no charge for attendance;
- iii. NASACRE AGM was scheduled for May 11th, also in Birmingham, at a cost of £70.00 per delegate. If any SACRE member wished to attend they should contact Emma Senior; and,
- iv. The Westfield Trust awarded funding for development projects with young people through SACRE. Emma Senior was exploring the possibility of entering a project for this award. The Chairman declared an interest in this as he also Chaired and co-ordinated the Panel that considered applications for this funding.

RESOLVED – That the oral report be noted.

5. Interfaith week events in November 2010

SACRE received a summary of events that had taken place during the very successful Interfaith week on 21-27 November 2010. Photographs showing various events were now available on the SACRE website.

Many SACRE members had been involved in different ways throughout the week and members gave a brief outline of these, including visits to schools, a spiritual space at King Edwards High School and the Exploring Islam exhibition.

RESOLVED – That the summary of events be noted.

6. Celebrate RE March 2011: Staffordshire Initiatives

Celebrate RE was due to take place in March 2011 and would be a month long celebration of religious education in England and Wales.

SACRE members received an update on new developments for this month of celebrations. The events would included:

- a. the Staffordshire RE Conference on 2 March;
- b. school displays within the Kingston Centre throughout March; and,
- c. two free Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for teachers of RE.

RESOLVED –That the new developments within Celebrating RE be noted.

7. Examination Results debrief 2009-2010

SACRE received a summary and statistical analysis of the standards achieved in GCSE full and short courses, and in A level and Advanced Subsidiary GCE Religious Studies in 2010.

Key issues identified in the analysis were:

Overall

- a) In 2010 a total of 6952 students were entered for GCSE Religious Studies, either Full or Short Course.
- b) A developing trend was for schools to offer both Full and Short Course at KS 4. 23 schools now offered both examinations. 44 out of 55 schools offered the short course, 33 schools also offered the full course.
- c) Overall 76 students were entered for AS level and 212 students for A2 at the end of KS5. There was a rise in the number of entries at AS level

Full Course GCSE

- a) The number of schools entering pupils for the Full Course had remained relatively steady since 2004, with four county schools entering over 50% of pupils for this examination.
- b) The percentage of pupils attaining grades A* to C had risen above the national average for 2010 despite falling below the national average last year. The differential was +1.8 percentage points.
- c) Attracting boys to the course continued to be an issue. The number of girls entered had remained steady however there had been a fall in the number of boys entered this year.

Short Course GCSE

- a) 44 out of 55 Staffordshire secondary schools now entered pupils for the Short Course. The number of entries had risen in 2010.
- b) The number of Staffordshire students gaining the higher grades A* to C continued to be below the national level for boys and girls, the Staffordshire average being 3.6 percentage points below the national figure.

Advanced Subsidiary (AS) GCE

- a) The number of entries at AS level had increased.
- b) Recruitment of boys to the course remained an issue, with the ratio at approximately 3:1 in both years.

- c) The percentage of pupils gaining higher grades remained below the national average.
- d) Attainment in AS level continued to be an issue.

Advanced (A2) GCE

- a) The number of pupils entered for A Level (A2) had fallen slightly in 2010.
- b) Attracting boys to the course remained an issue with the ratio remaining at about 3:1.
- c) At the higher grades Staffordshire pupils continued to attain below the national average.

Members received details of the different examination boards used and the courses chosen, with philosophy and ethics being the most popular course choice, and Islam being the usual faith studied alongside Christianity.

SACRE members wished to congratulate Staffordshire teachers and pupils on their hard work and continued efforts to raise the standard of attainment in the County.

RESOLVED –That the report be received.

8. Any Other Business

- a. Pupils from Alleyne’s High School had been invited to attend this meeting to give a presentation on their involvement with the Holocaust Education Trusts “Lessons from Auschwitz” project, but had been unable to attend at the last minute. This would be considered for a future meeting.
- b. Shahid Hussain had contacted Cllr Peter Davies in connection with becoming a member of SACRE. He had given Mr Hussain the contact details of the clerk to SACRE and the Chairman suggested that, when he contacted the clerk, he be invited to attend the next SACRE meeting as an observer.
- c. Training for those SACRE members who go into schools could be considered.
- d. Any ideas about how to highlight the work and role of SACRE should be forwarded to Emma Senior.

9. Dates of future meetings:

RESOLVED –That a new date be considered for the next SACRE meeting, sometime during the week beginning 6 June, and that the subsequent dates for SACRE meetings be agreed as:

Monday 14 November 2011, 2.00pm

Tuesday 7 February 2012, 2.00pm

Monday 14 May 2012, 2.00pm

**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.