

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 7 November 2018

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

Julie Thompson (Co-Optee), Diana Cutler, Sam Kirwan, Mohamed Parekh, Ian Lawson, Lauren Nicholson Ward, Mark Sutton, Syed Hussain, Judy Wyman, Gabi Oldfield and Bob Spencer

Apologies for absence: Linda Goodwin, Tajinder Singh, Sam Phillips and Vickie Longson

Also in attendance - Mary Gale, SACRE Advisor and Mandy Pattinson, Clerk.

PART ONE

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman

RESOLVED: That:

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

2. Welcome to New Members

There were no new Members attending the meeting. Mary Gale was welcomed as Advisor to SACRE.

3. Declaration of Any Other Business

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the SACRE Meeting held on 20 June 2018

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 20 June 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. Matters arising from the last meeting

Following the last meeting, Councillor B Spencer had met with the Head of Codsall High School to discuss the school not offering adequate Religious Education (RE) studies. He informed Members that the school had tried to accommodate the pupils wishes but the reasons given for the apparent lack of provision at GCSE level was due to lack of teachers; funding issues; and the low number of pupils who want to continue to study RE at KS4. The Head also felt that the pupils who entre the school at KS3 do not have enough RE knowledge to enable them to decide if they want to study at KS4 and this meant that the teaching required to bring them to a level to start GCSE studies was too great.

The SACRE discussed some of the possible solutions that the school could look at to rectify the situation. These included:

- Working with other schools in the area to form classes that are large enough to warrant a member of staff and a GCSE option.
- There was a lack of understanding of the comments that pupils do not have the right level of knowledge to start KS4 studies. The feeling of the SACRE was that primary school RE provision was generally good from Primary, First and Middle Schools in the local area but there may be slight variations. Some children may need to be nurtured and it was felt that the school may need to explain the subject to pupils and do more to encourage GCSE take up.
- It was suggested that the school could 'buddy up' with another school and share resources. This may need some creative timetabling.
- There was also a possibility that the subject can be delivered by someone whose main subject was in another teaching area. With the right level of support this had been successful in other subject areas.

A Member asked if all educational providers such as the JCB academy, had to provide RE even when they have pupils from many different religions. It was confirmed that all schools do have to provide RE provision.

It was noted that Codsall High school was in the process of applying for Academy status.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Spencer be thanked for meeting with the Headteacher and his offer to continue to work with them to find a solution.

6. An Update on Key Issues

SACRE considered the report which covered the main issues which affect RE since the last meeting. These covered:

- The new GCSE assessment scales.
- An update on the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) recent meetings. Mary Gale would continue to attend meetings and provide feedback.
- Westhill Legacy project – full report later on the agenda.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The CPD workshop in November had been cancelled due to low numbers attending. It was felt that this was due to a lack of school funding.
- Supporting Governors in understanding their Statutory requirements for RE. The School Governor Information Packs now contained information on the provision of RE and include a list of questions governors could ask when they visit their schools.
- Support for schools in understanding their Statutory requirements for RE. The headteachers E-bag is sent to all maintained schools each week. SACRE was informed that sometimes the heads didn't use the e-bags and didn't always have login details. Mary Gale informed members that she now had access to the E-bag and would be using any relevant information to inform the school governor updates through the School Governor Information Pack.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

7. NASACRE Update

The Chairman informed the group that he had attended recent meetings of NASACRE's Executive Committee, as an officer of NASACRE. Much attention was being given to the Commission on RE's final Report, "Religion and World Views", which had just been released. The Chairman emphasised that the Report had no statutory force whatsoever and that until there was a change in legislation, the existing regulations continued to apply. Schools needed to be reminded of this, as the Report was being given much publicity which could lead to uncertainty about the legal situation.

SACRE reflected on the proposal to change the name Religious Education to 'Religion and World Views'. The Report argued that more attention should be given to non-religious world views. However, this could marginalise "religion" as such, with schools focussing largely on moral teachings. In the context of the Report, a 'world view' meant an undergirding system of belief and values, religious or not, held by individuals.

The major RE bodies had held a national 20:20 Conference exploring the future of RE. More information would be provided when available.

The next NASACRE Annual Meeting was scheduled for the 22 May 2019 where they would be considering further the recommendations in the Commission on Religious Education's Report, among other items.

The Chairman stated that he was seeking to be replaced as Treasurer of NASACRE and asked if anyone would be interested in this role. He would be happy to talk through the requirements and time commitments if any member was interested.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

8. Application for Variation of Practice

There were none on this occasion.

9. Westhill/NASACRE Legacy project Explore-Engage-Reflect

During the 2017-2018 financial year, SACRE had received a grant from the Westhill/NASACRE Award scheme to help disseminate the new Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE through a Conference for pupils entitled Explore-Engage-Reflect. Youth Net in conjunction with the Entrust Minority Ethnic Advisory Service (MEAS) team are now seeking to build on this by planning similar events offering support, resources and workshops on Christianity and Islam for schools in Staffordshire. An opportunity had arisen to mount such an event in the Stone area.

Eight schools had accepted the invitation to take part and as a result almost 600 children from First and Primary schools had been involved over the three days of the initiative. Entrust and Youth Net leaders had been supported by a group of volunteers at the Crossing Community Centre, near Stone railway station.

The costs per session were: Entrust - £190.20, The Youth Net - £60.00 and a donation to Community Centre to cover refreshments - £7.80. This equalled a cost per child of £2.15. The activities were led by Alison Way of The Youth Net and Waheeda Qureshi of Entrust, with assistance from local churches.

The future of the project was discussed. Youth Net and Entrust were both happy to continue to support the project if funding were available, either through the SACRE budget or from other sources. Mary Gale would look into this and support SACRE in commissioning support for this project.

SACRE were informed that there had been only one child who had been withdrawn from the exhibitions for religious grounds.

Mr Parekh asked if he could attend any future events as an observer. Mary Gale agreed to contact Entrust to enquire.

Additional funding might be available under the PREVENT agenda. However this might lead to the event having a different slant and a change in emphasis.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

10. Discussion on the report from the Commission on Religious Education- Religion and World Views: The Way Forward

The Commission on RE published its final report on Sunday 9th September after a lengthy consultation period. The Commission called for an overhaul of the subject to include teaching about non-religious beliefs to better reflect the diversity of modern society. Changing the name of the subject was proposed as part of this work. The Report spelt out a National Entitlement in RE and a National Plan for RE, with a change to the name and role of SACRES.

Members of SACRE used the document to reflect on the future of SACRE. The Chairman reminded members that the Report's recommendations were just that - recommendations. While some could be adopted without a problem, others would need a change in the law; until there was a change in the law the existing statutory framework would remain.

The concept of a 'National Entitlement' was discussed and whether it would be easier to deliver in schools if RE had a wider remit. There was concern that by taking the term RE out of use, schools might avoid addressing the fact of religion and faith and adopt more of a citizenship approach.

Members asked what Ofsted's responsibility was around schools providing RE. SACRE was informed that in 2019 Ofsted inspection guidance would change; this would pick up RE as part of a wider curriculum. If Mary Gale heard of any other changes she agreed to inform SACRE.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

11. Draft Annual SACRE Report 2017-2018

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 be available to teacher associations and local faith communities via the Entrust website.

SACRE felt that the naming of schools was not desirable in the report and requested that the number of schools either failing to engage or causing concerns should be included not their names. They also agreed that the wording on page 8 of the draft report be changed from 'failed to engage' to 'did not engage' and 'causing concern' to 'required further contact'.

Members were requested to read the report and make any comments available to the clerk by 14 November 2018.

RESOLVED: That the 2017-18 Annual Report be approved, subject to final editing.

12. SACRE Budget

SACRE were reminded that there was a budget available to support the work of SACRE during the financial year 2018 – 2019 as approved by the Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning).

The outturn statement was attached to the report which showed an available spend of £5,625. Members considered how best to spend this amount as any remainder would be lost. It was felt that the continuation of the Westhill, Explore-Engage-Reflect project would benefit the majority and could be delivered by the end of the municipal year. Primary schools who had not attended the previous round could be given the opportunity to attend at reduced rates.

A Member asked why there were only two religions covered by the Explore-Engage-Reflect scheme as in his area other faiths were present as well. SACRE were informed that the original Award application had specified Islam and Christianity because of the obvious relevance of these two religions and because suitable leaders and agencies had been identified who would deliver the project successfully. The "legacy" initiative had built on this. Mary Gale and the Chairman agreed to talk to the member about the feasibility of doing a similar project specifically for a more diverse community.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Budget update report be noted.
- b) That subject to the approval of the Chairman, the SACRE advisor be approved to use the unspent budget to extend the Westhill, Explore-Engage-Reflect project.

13. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

14. Date of the next SACRE meeting

RESOLVED: That the next SACRE meeting be held on Wednesday 6 February 2019 at 2:00pm, in The White Room, Council Chamber, Stafford.

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