

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 17 November 2010

Present: Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf

Rummy Bajaj, Dr Laow, Liz O'Brien, Muhammad Parekh, Sam Phillips, Mary Gale, Colin Hopkins, Rosemary Woodward, Peter Davies, Veronica Downes, Liz Staples and Frankie Durairatnam

Apologies for absence: Christine Chadwick, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Karen Knobbs, Sydney Morris, Sue Blackmore, Dave Lyons, Terry Finn, Ivan Jennings and Tricia Budd

PART ONE

1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

RESOLVED – That Rev Preb Michael Metcalf and Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal be elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively for the ensuing year.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 May 2010

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of Rev Preb Michael Metcalf on attendance, the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

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. Recruitment and retention of RE teachers (SACRE were made aware of a newly qualified teacher (NQT) appointment, at a Staffordshire school, to the post of Head of RE and raised some concerns that the teacher had not as yet accessed any of the available support offered by the Senior Adviser e.g. attendance at NQT or RE secondary network meetings);
- ii. Subject focused inspections of Cheslyn Hay Sport and Community High Schools, Belgrave High School and Crackley Bank Primary School;
- iii. Farmington Fellowship for Bev Young from Thomas Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter (members also heard that Dawn Shenton from Rycroft Middle School and Janet Young from the Lichfield Special Schools had also received a Fellowship);
- iv. SHAP calendar and story book offer (members were also informed that many resources from "RE Today" were available to Staffordshire teachers of RE at discounted prices); and,

- v. An update on the suggested membership approach by Shahid Hussain from the Muslim community of Burton-upon-Trent.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

4. NASACRE Update

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

- a) there was some uncertainty over the way the Government policy was developing and how this would impact on RE in schools, Local Authorities (LA) and SACREs;
- b) there was a move towards not re-appointing RE advisors or appointing on a temporary basis. SACRE was a statutory body and the RE advisor was key in supporting the work of the SACRE as well as the vital role they played within schools;
- c) Celebrate RE was a NASACRE event taking place on 31 March 2011 in Birmingham on the theme of “Whose RE is it anyway?”

RESOLVED – That the oral update be noted.

5. Monitoring of Primary School Provision 2009-2010

Monitoring questionnaires had been circulated to secondary and middle schools for a number of years and from 2005 they had formed the main source of information on the provision of RE in Staffordshire Schools. Questionnaires had also been circulated to primary schools since 2006 on a three-year rolling programme, with approximately 100 schools being contacted each year.

Whilst members accepted that statistically the number of responses they had received was a reasonable response rate they were disappointed that more primary schools had not completed the questionnaires. In the process next year members asked that follow-up emails be sent to try and encourage a greater response rate.

Members had some concerns over the use of Teaching Assistants (TAs) to deliver RE, although they understood that TAs did not have responsibility for planning the curriculum.

Members received details of the primary schools data for 2009-2010.

RESOLVED – That the findings of the 2010 primary questionnaires be received.

6. Religious Education in English Schools: Non-statutory guidance 2009

In 2009 “Religious Education in Schools: Non Statutory Guidance” had been published to support the provision of high quality RE in maintained schools in England. The JCB Academy opened in September 2010 and currently offered RE provision in line with the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and taught Key Stage 4 students a short course GCSE in Religious Studies.

The new guidance gave clearer advice on academies and stated that:

“all academies are required, through their funding agreements, to teach RE. For Academies without a religious character, this will be the locally agreed syllabus.”

and

“All academies are inspected on the quality of their RE by Ofsted as part of the normal inspections regime.”

Members felt that a letter of introduction should be sent to the JCB Academy offering support for RE and setting out the appropriate charges. Members also heard that two further secondary schools, John Taylor and De Ferrers, were in the process of becoming academies, though both schools already had good results from their teaching of RE.

RESOLVED – That a letter of introduction be sent to the JCB Academy with an offer of appropriate charged support for RE.

7. Transforming religious education: the Ofsted thematic report on RE 2006-2009

In June 2010 “Transforming religious education”, the Ofsted thematic report on RE 2006-09 was published as an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of RE in primary and secondary schools. The report had been based on 94 primary and 89 secondary school visits, two of which were Staffordshire schools.

Members received a summary of the reports findings.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. Applications for Variation of Practice

SACRE were reminded that, should written application be received from a head teacher of a county school to disapply the requirement for broadly Christian collective worship and/or make amendments to the way the Agreed Syllabus was followed, SACRE should determine whether the application was appropriate. It was agreed that SACRE should be kept informed of any developments in this area.

There were currently no applications.

RESOLVED – That the current position of applications for variation of practise be noted.

9. Celebrate RE March 2011: Staffordshire Initiative

SACRE were informed of the Celebrate RE national initiative, which was a month long celebration of religious education in England and Wales taking place in March 2011. Within Staffordshire an RE conference led by RE today would be held on 2 March. The conference would give an opportunity during the extended lunch break for SACRE members to share examples of their work with delegates.

Schools were being invited to submit work for display at the Kinston Centre during March to highlight the good practise that existed around the County.

RESOLVED – That the arrangements for Celebrate RE 2011 in Staffordshire be noted.

10. Interfaith Week November 21-27th

Interfaith week was taking place on 21-27 November 2010 and SACRE were informed of the opportunities for Staffordshire schools throughout the week, including:

- a) Discover Sikhism, an opportunity to visit the Gurdwara, learn about Sikhism and practise and share in the langar;
- b) Explore Islam, an opportunity to learn about Muslim beliefs and values, follow the route of the pilgrimage and find out about life in a Muslim home;
- c) Arrange talks in schools from representatives of the Baha'i, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist faiths; and,
- d) Arrange visits to places of worship, including a Synagogue and Gurdwara.

RESOLVED – That the summary of planned events for Interfaith week in Staffordshire be noted.

11. An Analysis of Examination Results for Staffordshire Schools 2010

SACRE received an analysis of RE examination results for Staffordshire for information. The detail of this analysis would be considered alongside the A level results at their next meeting.

RESOLVED – That :

- a) the report be received and the data be brought to the next meeting of SACRE for detailed consideration; and,
- b) letters of congratulation or support be sent on SACRE's behalf to those schools identified.

12. The SACRE Budget 2010 - 2011

Members received details of the SACRE budget for the financial year 2010-2011.

Continuing priorities for this financial year included:

- a) professional development for SACRE members;
- b) support for the Student Council for RE;
- c) development of guidance materials to accompany the 2009 Agreed Syllabus;
- d) the SACRE Awards 2010; and,
- e) the SACRE lecture.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

13. Any Other Business

SACRE were informed of the following items of business:

- a) Liz O'Brien shared details of work she had undertaken to create symbol supportive text that could be used to ensure accessibility for all children. The text was available for download on the Widgit website and members were given details of this site and of further excellent resources;
- b) The new Student Council was due to have its first meeting next week and had approximately 23 members. There was some concern over the funding of this for the future and it may become necessary to consider different ways of working; and,
- c) Frankie Durairatnam informed members of his recent visit to a Newport School.

14. Date of the next meeting

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of SACRE be Tuesday 15 February 2011, commencing at 2.00 pm, 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.