

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 5 February 2020

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

Mohamed Sedky, Linda Goodwin, Julie Thompson, Diana Cutler, Sam Kirwan, Mohamed Parekh, Mark Sutton, Syed Hussain, Judy Wyman, Gabi Oldfield, Vickie Longson, Bob Spencer and Lydia Bartlett

Apologies for absence: Dr Laow Panyasiri, Sam Phillips, Ian Lawson, Shaun Miles and Maddy Bell

Also in attendance - Mary Gale (SACRE advisor) and Mandy Pattinson (Clerk)

Sonia Andjeikovic

SACRE was informed that SACRE member, Sonia Andjelkovic had recently passed away. The Chairman warmly commended her contributions to SACRE and her professional qualities. A minutes silence has held in her memory.

PART ONE

55. Welcome to New Members

Maddy Bell representing the Baptist Free Church had recently been nominated to become a member of SACRE. Unfortunately, Maddy was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments.

RESOLVED: That Maddy Bell, representing the Baptist Free Church be welcomed in her absence.

56. Declaration of Any Other Business

SACRE were advised that "Any Other Business" was not a standard item of business on Local Authority agendas as it did not give advanced notice to the public of items to be discussed. There was a debate as to its merits. It was felt that generally, such items should be raised in advance of the meeting which would give the public an opportunity to decide if they wish to attend and listen to the debate.

However, a member gave notice that she wished to raise an item on climate change and how local faith communities could work together as Stafford and District Friends of Faith to provide information. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the end of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a) That 'Any Other Business' is not included on future agendas.
- b) An item on climate change and how faith communities could work together, be discussed at the end of the meeting.

57. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 6 November 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 6 November 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that there was a spelling mistake on page 2 minute 45 'referencing'.

58. 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 Westhill Legacy project - The support had been rolled out in further schools in the County and particularly in the Burton area. The Burton dates were 5th and 12th February at Victoria Community Primary and Tower View Primary schools. These would be in the same format as previously, covering Christianity and Islam as the schools felt that these were the most appropriate to their community.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) – The support offered in the form of RE training had been well received and it was felt that this could be seen to have helped improve future inspection ratings and further understanding of the Agreed Syllabus.
- The purchase of the Hodder's "Explore RE" textbooks, which had been agreed at the last meeting, had now been carried out. The textbooks would be distributed to schools as soon as possible.
- With regard to the additional Youth Net (sacred spaces) project, more information would be provided to the next meeting. Dates booked so far include 24th and 31st March at Stafford Manor High School and 7th May at King Edward VI High School. One additional school (Abbot Beyne) had also been contacted but there had been no reply to date.
- Mary Gales future support for SACRE had been confirmed until the end of March 2021.
- An update on the new Ofsted schedule and reports to date was included in the report. It appeared that RE was considered in a similar manner alongside other subjects e.g. History and Geography. Only general comments seem to be made so it would be difficult to specify where a problem was or with which subject.
- The Freedom of Information request prompted members to reflect on whether the guidance information provided by SACRE regarding *Applications for determinations on Collective Worship* needs to be refreshed. How will this be addressed going forward?

Note by the Clerk : *following the meeting the following information was provided.*
<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dfecircular1-94.pdf> Paragraph 74 states that "It is for each SACRE to decide how applications should be made, and to make available any necessary guidance to schools."

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That Entrust be thanked for continuing to commission Mary Gales in the support advisor role for SACRE until the end of March 2021.

59. An Update on NASACRE (including conference details)

The Chairman included the following pieces of information as part of the update:

- The next NASACRE national conference would be held on 18 May 2020. He asked if anyone wanted to attend to represent the Staffordshire SACRE in addition to himself, as he could then be funded by NASACRE. It was felt that all members should be invited and be given until the end of April 2020 to respond.
- The Chairman advised SACRE that in the recent Report of the Commission on Religious Educations 'Religion and World Views: The way forward', it was proposed that SACRE's would become Local Area Networks. Legislation would be needed to bring about these changes. NASACRE were joining in a pilot project to test how this would work in practice.
- The Chairman and Vice Chairman of NASACRE were due to meet with the Department for Education concerning guidance on collective worship. It was likely that there would be consultations concerning Collective Worship over the next 12 months.
- It was reported that the Welsh Government's Department for Education, had proposed that the "right to withdraw" would be removed from any part of the curriculum, including the right to withdraw from RE.
- The next round of Westhill Legacy funding would open soon. It was felt that SACRE may would want to apply in the future, but not in this round.
- NASACRE were seeking to engage with the issue of Agreed Syllabus copyright. It was reported that NATRE were charging Local Authorities to write and Agreed Syllabus for RE. Staffordshire SACRE had in the past made their syllabus available on the internet for others to use without cost, on the proviso that Staffordshire County Council were acknowledged as the source.

RESOLVED:

- a) All members of the Staffordshire SACRE be asked if they wish to attend the National Conference on 18 May 2020.
- b) That Mary Gale be approved to attend the conference should no other member volunteer.

60. Article by Reverend Preb Michael Metcalf - Think Piece "What's in a name?"

SACRE considered the article written by the Chairman designed to provoke a debate on whether schools should be teaching Religion and World Views or Religions and World Views. The article suggested that the first title could lead to an undue proportion of time being given to non-religious world views, at the expense of learning about actual faiths and faith communities. The article mapped out two contrasting understandings of what RE was about. Generally, SACRE felt that both sides of the argument needed to be heard.

RESOLVED: That the article be noted, and the Chairman be thanked for his contribution.

61. Report on the Analysis of 2019 GCSE and A Level Results for Staffordshire Maintained Schools

SACRE received a statistical analysis of the standards achieved in GCSE and A Level in Religious Studies (RS) for Staffordshire Maintained schools.

Members were reminded that there had been changes to the GCSE regulations regarding assessment with students undertaking their GCSE studies now being assessed on a scale of 1-9 not A* to C or A* to G grades.

Overall, national average GCSE results for RS for 2019 found that the national results for state funded schools for Grade 9-5 was reported at 60.2%. In Staffordshire the average was 50.7%. This is a decline from the 2018 Staffordshire figure of 51.6%. Girls continue to out- perform the boys. This is true at national and local level.

A closer examination of the results table revealed that there were several Staffordshire maintained schools achieving results well above the national average.

In respect of A Level results, Staffordshire's 2019 results (39.1% A*-B) were lower than national but an improvement on the 2018 results of 36.6%. Results for all pupils show that although pupils in Staffordshire achieved below the national average at grades A*-B, they performed very well across the full spectrum of grades A*-E (97% compared to 100% nationally).

SACRE requested that letters of congratulation be sent to those schools whose pupils had achieved commendably above the national average results for those achieving A*-C in GCSE RE. They also agreed that letters should also be sent to those high achieving schools at A level.

It was felt that as the number of maintained schools continues to reduce it could be worthwhile comparing all schools (Maintained and Academies) against the national trend next year.

RESOLVED:

- a) The report be received; and
- b) Letters of congratulations be sent to the schools whose pupils achieved results above the national average in GCSE and A Level Religious Studies.

62. Report on the Westhill/NASCRES Legacy project

As discussed earlier on the agenda, two additional events had been arranged in the Burton area and were currently underway. Feedback from those who had attended the project in the Stafford area in January 2020, was that they were surprised at how little children knew about either the Christian or Islamic faith. Following a question on whether other religions could be included in the project, the response was that they could, but they would need to reflect local demand and would need an expert in that faith to lead the exercise. The next national census was due in 2021 and it was felt that this may be an appropriate time to review the information on the faith makeup of the county.

With reference to the additional Youth Net project, SACRE would receive more information at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

63. An Update on Relationship and Sex and Health Education

SACRE considered the report which gave some guidance on the rolling out of the September 2020 Statutory 'Relationship and Health Education' (RHE) in primary schools and 'Relationship and Sex and Health Education' (RSHE) in secondary school curriculum and the possible implications for SACREs. Although SACREs were not directly involved, some SACRE advisors may also be requested to provide advice to schools on this subject and there was some potential confusion about the boundaries between RE and these new areas of learning.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

64. The Current Budget 2019-20

SACRE considered the update report on the 2019/2020 budget. Costs for photocopying /postage and refreshments had not yet been added. There was some confusion over whether there would be a carry forward at the end of the financial year. Mary Gale was under the impression that the only money that could be carried forward was the Westhill grant money. Officers at the meeting felt that there would be a carry forward of the general budget.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

65. Application for Variation of Practice

There were none on this occasion.

66. Any Other Business

Gabi Oldfield informed the group that the Staffordshire and District Friends of Faith group had recently produced a Booklet entitled 'Extinction? Where does faith lead us in Stafford?' The theme was environmental protection.

The Staffordshire and District Friends of Faith group had already taken part in a joint tree planting event. In addition, it was noted that 15th February is the start date of the week-long Green Arts Festival "There is No Planet B" in St. Chad's Church. There would also be a market stall in Stafford on 15th February 2020 to help to promote the group.

67. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was due to be held on Wednesday, 24 June 2020.

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