

## **MINUTES**

### **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 4 March 2010**

Present: Christine Chadwick, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Sydney Morris, Liz O'Brien, Muhammad Parekh, Sam Phillips, Bill Walley, Mary Gale, Rosemary Woodward, Dorothy Kirkham, Peter Davies, Terry Finn, Liz Staples, Tricia Budd, Frankie Durairatnam and Liz Williams

Apologies for absence: Rummy Bajaj, Lynn Godden, Karen Knobbs, Dr Laow, Sue Blackmore, Colin Hopkins, Dave Lyons, Veronica Downes and Ivan Jennings

Also in attendance - Heather Farr and Julie Plant

### **PART ONE**

#### **77. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2009**

**RESOLVED** – That following amendments to various grammatical errors the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **78. RE and the School Improvement Division**

As requested at the last meeting of the Council the Deputy Head of Service, Sue Bardwell attended the meeting and discussed the Directorate's future plans for provision of the service. She stressed her wish to ensure continuity of service and support for the SACRE and reaffirmed the Authority's commitment to the function.

#### **79. An Update on Key Issues**

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

(i) The Student Council for Religious Education – autumn term meeting held on 20 November 2009 at which a new cohort of Year 12 students was welcomed. In order to make the Council meetings as accessible as possible to all student members changes had been made to their meeting arrangements. In addition an open discussion session had been introduced on agendas giving this SACRE the opportunity to seek views on specific issues.

(ii) Student Handbook for Religious Education – this reference book giving brief, factual accounts of six major faiths had been made available for schools with demand high. The books were particularly beneficial to primary schools where non-specialist teachers provided religious education.

(iii) Professional development opportunities for RE – a variety of development opportunities including network meetings and activity days had been provided during the autumn term for teachers. A significant new initiative was an A-level clinic to be led by

an OCR examiner in order to address the fall in performance of Staffordshire students at post-GCSE level. In addition a “Meet the Muslims” session had been organised for all teachers and school improvement division staff with an invitation to attend extended to SACRE members.

(iv) 2009 Staffordshire Syllabus – launched in September 2009 and accessible from the web site, together with a variety of new information.

[www.education.staffordshire.gov.uk/re](http://www.education.staffordshire.gov.uk/re)

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

## **80. NASACRE Update**

The Chairman reported that the NASACRE annual meeting would be held on 12 May 2010 with the keynote speaker Clare Short. Copies of the AGM papers were circulated with the Chairman particularly drawing attention to proposals to change the Constitution in terms of the handling of motions and the increase in the number of co-opted places on the Executive Committee from 3 to 6.

The Chairman explained the background to the proposed changes and sought a mandate from the meeting on how to cast the one vote allocated to the SACRE (regardless of number of members attending the AGM).

Continuing, the Chairman reported on a joint conference to be held on 24 March 2010 between NASACRE and the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency) on “RE and the new Primary Curriculum”. Heather Farr advised the meeting that the new curriculum is scheduled to come into effect in 2011 and that the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus 2009 was written to take account of significant changes.

Concluding his update on the work of NASACRE the Chairman circulated information on “Celebrating RE”, a proposed month long celebration of religious education in England and Wales to be held in March 2011. Heather Farr explained that the intention of the celebration was for regional authorities, led by a regional champion, to stage specific events and projects, highlighting religious education in schools. She suggested that in practical terms Staffordshire as an authority would be able to organise events, but would probably not be able to commit to regional or national initiatives as no additional resources were being made available. It was suggested that current projects which were not feasible for submission for the forthcoming round of NASACRE awards might be developed for use as part of the celebrations.

**RESOLVED** – That the Chairman’s update report on NASACRE be noted and that he be authorised to vote in favour of the proposed motions at the AGM relating to the procedure for handling motions and the increase in number of co-opted places on the Executive Committee from 3 to 6.

## **81. Monitoring of Middle and Secondary School Provision 2009-2010**

The Corporate Director (Children, Young People and Families) reported that middle and high schools had been surveyed on their provision of religious education, and submitted an analysis of the results of that survey.

For secondary schools 40 of 49 questionnaires issued had been received with 10 of 12 from middle schools. The secondary schools had shown good performances in examinations, a high number of schools entering pupils for those examinations, and high level of compliance with requirements. It was pleasing that almost 7,000 students had sat RE examinations with a commendable number of 23 schools offering both full and short courses.

In terms of provision within the schools, the vast majority offered a good time allocation for RE for examination groups, however the non-examination groups experienced a short fall. Attention needed to be focused on those schools offering less than one hour per week to RE groups, and to those who were including the subject within their Humanities option without approaching the SACRE. Areas of concern included insufficient time allocation, and a lack of specialist teachers in some schools.

For middle schools there were no particular areas causing concern, with all having an identified subject leader and all allocating the appropriate time in each school week. In some instances issues highlighted by schools was the problem caused by staff changes and loss of continuity.

Referring to the areas of concern, particularly for high schools, it was agreed that Heather Farr and the Chairman review the monitoring forms, pursue specific concerns with the individual schools and report back in more detail to the next meeting of SACRE.

**RESOLVED** – That the outcome of the monitoring exercise be noted and the proposed review of schools causing concern be approved.

## **82. The Work of the Advanced Skills Teacher**

Emma Senior, Advanced Skills Teacher for RE reported on her work to date in that role, explaining that she was formally employed within the RE department at Alleyne's High School but was seconded to the AST role on one day each week. Initially she had concentrated on contributing to the new Agreed Syllabus and had gained an in-depth knowledge of its working. She was currently engaged in visiting individual schools and advising teachers on RE provision, student engagement and examination promotion. She saw the focus of her future activities on developing her training role while continuing to work with schools. Of note was the proactive approach being adopted by schools to RE provision inviting her in to advise and assist.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

## **83. Religious Education in English Schools: Non-Statutory Guidance 2010**

The Corporate Director (Children, Young People and Families) circulated the recently published non-statutory guidance on Religion Education in English Schools, commenting on the considerable changes made to it since publication of the draft version. The document replaced the long standing Circular 1/94. Heather Farr

circulated a copy of a section of the guidance, which provided a check list for an effective partnership between a Local Authority and its SACRE, and the meeting considered each individual point in detail concluding that all criteria were met.

In discussing the check list, the Council discussed the extent to which SACRE contributes effectively to the community cohesion agenda, and considered that whilst not specifically referred to by name, community cohesion was a theme that ran through the whole work of SACRE. Examples of suitable projects included the "Meet the Muslims" initiative. All members felt it important to maintain the focus of SACRE on religious education provision and to maintain its independence from inter-faith groups purposely established to promote community cohesion.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the recently issued guidance be noted and that the check list for governors and headteachers included at page 30 be circulated by the Chairman and Senior Advisor for RE to all schools; and  
(b) – That members of SACRE highlight any particular areas included within the guidance for further discussions.

#### **84. The SACRE Budget 2009-2010**

The Corporate Director (Children, Young People and Families) gave details of the SACRE budget 2009/10 which had an allocation of £11,650 with £11,819.54 spent to date.

**RESOLVED** – That the budget position be noted.

#### **85. Any Other Business**

The Senior Advisor for RE reported on a request from a representative of the Burton-upon-Trent Muslim Community to be allocated a seat on SACRE, indicating that that request had yet to be formalised. The Council discussed the number of Muslim Community Groups in the Burton-upon-Trent area and the need to ensure that the proposed applicant was suitably representative.

It was agreed that Mrs. Staples and Mr. Davis, as elected representatives from the Burton-upon-Trent area, liaise with the Senior Advisor for RE on any formal application received.

Heather Farr reported that the SACRE awards would be held at the Seabridge QLS on 30 June 2010 and invited all members to attend to celebrate her retirement.

Hisfah Haroon-Iqbal reported on a proposed multi-face group event to be held in Victoria Park, Stafford on Sunday 4 July 2010, and invited all faith groups to participate.

#### **86. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 17 May 2010 at 2.00 pm at the Kingston Centre, Stafford.

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

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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.