

# Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting held on 28 June 2023

Present: Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf (Chair)

Attendance	
Linda Goodwin	Vicky Priestley
Judy Wyman	Philip Atkins, OBE
Gabi Oldfield	Paul Northcott
Vickie Longson	Mike Wilcox
Shaun Miles	Kath Perry, MBE
Zoe Cahalan	

**Also in attendance:** Mary Gale and Simon Humble

**Apologies:** Julie Thompson, Tajinder Singh, Sam Kirwan, Sam Phillips, Lauren Nicholson Ward, Maddy Belle and Paul Snape

## 1. Welcome to New Members

There were no new members to welcome, however the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) was informed that Mohammed Parekh (Muslim representative), Claire Tomlinson (Roman Catholic representative) and Amy Bayliss-Fox (Salvation Army representative) had all tendered their resignations.

It was also noted that the current membership terms of two members would be coming to an end in the Summer of 2023. These included Vickie Longson (CofE representative) and Shaun Miles (NAHT representative).

All appointing bodies had been contacted to ask them to appoint new, or reappoint the incumbent, representatives.

**Resolved:** a. That the update regarding membership of the SACRE be noted.

b. That Mohammed Parekh, Claire Tomlinson and Amy Bayliss-Fox be thanked for their participation with the Staffordshire SACRE.

## 2. Declaration of Any other Business

There were no declarations of any other business on this occasion.

### **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**Minute 150 – Matters Arising.** It was noted at the meeting held on the 1 February 2023, that an updated figure for children sitting Religious Education (RE) exams in Staffordshire was expected. In response to a question asking if this figure had been made available yet, it was explained that the data provided remained unvalidated, but the validated data was still being chased. The Adviser hoped to be able to update the SACRE at the meeting to take place in November 2023.

**Minute 153 – Agreed Syllabus Launch.** Councillor Wilcox noted how well attended the launch of the Agreed Syllabus was and congratulated the Chair and Adviser for their efforts in delivering the event.

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 01 February 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair.

### **4. Reflection on Difference, Diversity and Inclusion**

The SACRE were joined by Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal OBE, who spoke about Difference, Diversity and Inclusion.

Hifsa discussed the work she had undertaken over the years to increase awareness and understanding of the Islamic faith. Hifsa also highlighted some of the workshops and sessions she, and colleagues, had been integral in implementing to open up the Islamic faith to everybody, and also the support that had been put in place to better prepare teachers who had taught about the Islamic faith, noting the differences, but also understanding the commonalities. Hifsa also shared some of the issues she had faced and addressed over the years of working in schools, with pupils and their families.

The Advisor informed the SACRE that in September 2023 the Government would be implementing a revised document for safeguarding – called keeping children safe in education in 2023. This would look closely at, and monitor the use of, new derogatory words being used by children.

It was highlighted that a major issue was that children could access inflammatory and misleading information very easily online, and it was difficult to control this access. In response to a question asking if there was a way that children could be taught the difference between real and fake information, Hifsa explained that her organisation had spent time educating children to tell the difference between real and fake information, and which websites could be trusted to provide safe information. However, it was explained that some websites and social media platforms had removed controls that meant extreme, inappropriate, inflammatory or derogatory comments could be made

without control. Unfortunately, these sites were hosted outside of the United Kingdom, so were not held to the same safeguarding guidelines.

Members provided their own experiences, highlighting the importance of the role that RE played in supporting young people and schools to address issues that are occurring in the world and prepare young people for entering into that world.

**Resolved:** a. That the information included within the presentation be noted.

b. That Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, OBE, be thanked for her presentation.

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

- **Advisor**

The SACRE were informed that Mary Gale had been recommissioned as the SACRE Adviser for the financial year 2023-2024. The commission started on April 1st, 2023.

- **RE Agreed Syllabus (AS) Launch**

The SACRE were informed that the revised Staffordshire RE Agreed Syllabus was launched at the Entrust headquarters in Stafford on the 27 February 2023. The launch was well attended with over 120 schools represented. SACRE members, Headteachers, RE leads, Trustees, CEOs and SCC representatives were present at the event.

There were keynote speeches from Tim Moss, the SCC Assistant Director for Education Strategy & Improvement, and our Chair Preb. Michael Metcalf. A letter of support was read out from Councillor Price, who was unable to attend. Mary Gale presented the main changes of the AS, along with the statutory requirements of delivery required from September 2023, and a practising teacher gave a presentation explaining how her school would be addressing the requirements of the revised AS.

The feedback after the event was extremely positive. Many schools requested additional information, including additional examples of planning for the spring and summer terms. This was provided in draft format on request. Special schools were complimentary about the information provided for them - this resulted in face-to-face visits taking place to provide extra support - additional visits of this nature would continue throughout the summer term. A webinar presentation was also provided on Ofsted requirements for Special schools which included RE aspects.

Schools were reminded of the need to follow the AS from September 2023 onwards. This message would be reinforced via the headteacher's e-bag and via the autumn term Governor Information Pack.

- **Continuous Professional Development**

The Adviser continued to support RE leaders in several schools. This had involved supporting schools in understanding how to implement the revised Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus from September 2023.

The Adviser had provided support for schools who wished to carry out RE focus days, providing hints and tips and a schedule for the day. Some of this advice included a visit to the Open Centre-Faith Trail in Derby. Two schools followed this advice and reported that this had been an inspirational focus visit day and suited learners of all ages. For schools that could not afford a visit to Derby, speakers from the Open Centre were arranged to visit the school to support learning.

Governors and Trustees received information on RE in the summer 2023 Governor Information Pack. This included the status of the Agreed Syllabus. They had been encouraged to continue to work in their link governor roles to discuss the forthcoming revised Agreed Syllabus implementation. This information reached 300 plus schools and over 200 leaders. The information was presented through webinars led by the Adviser, and a face-to-face meeting at the training centre at the Entrust offices.

The Adviser also attended virtual meetings of the West Midlands Association of Religious Education Inspectors and Advisors and Consultants and a local National association of Teachers of Religious Education online meeting on the 6 and 14 March and on the 12 June 2023. Discussions centred around resources, the national plan for RE and the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus.

- **Westhill Legacy project - Explore, Engage, Reflect (EER) in conjunction with Youth Net.**

The SACRE had continued to fund the Westhill Legacy project from the 2022-2023 budget through commissioning the Entrust Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS) - to deliver workshops in conjunction with YouthNet.

The dates for the Spring term 2023 included:

- Monday 6 February at Springhead Primary, Talke Pits,
- Monday 6 March at Ravensmead, Bignall End,

- Wednesday 27 April St Mary's, Mucklestone,
- Tuesday 16 April Walton Priory Middle School, Stone.

Dates were yet to be agreed for the support of Baldwins Gate CE VC Primary school. Seven additional schools in the Newcastle area had been contacted and replies were awaited.

The Adviser attended the workshops held at St Mary's, Mucklestone and spoke to learners, staff and governors. All attendees agreed that these workshops had a positive impact on all. The learners were very aware of RE associated with Christianity and were able therefore to ask insightful questions regarding Islam and what it means to be a Muslim in Britain this century.

- **Continuation of the project**

The Adviser had attended a meeting on the 21 June 2023 with Kathryn Wright, the CEO of Culham St Gabriel - an endowed charitable foundation. They had provided grants for projects, such as the Westhill Legacy project, and the meeting was held to further explore grant support and the necessary application processes.

- **Update on St Chad's Pattingham application for the RE quality Mark**

In 2020 St Chad's had received a grant from the SACRE to support the application process of attaining the RE Quality Mark (REQM) award.

Due to COVID-19 the application process had been delayed and eventually had been moved to an online application process.

Recent information from the school had been received to inform us that the REQM assessment had taken place on the 21 June 23. It had been a challenging task to get all of the information compiled, but it had been achieved on time and the assessment went well.

The school would be invited to join the SACRE at the November 2023 meeting to share their experiences.

- **Request for support for RE resources from Flash Ley Primary School, Stafford. Possible £200 support from the 2023-24 budget**

The SACRE were informed that Flash Ley Primary School, Stafford had made a request for support to help them with the delivery of Religious Education studies, as a result of the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus. This was requested in the form of resources or artefacts, which

could be used to help inform lesson planning.

Notwithstanding the support options available from the RE Hubs (agenda item 8), a discussion took place to consider whether it would be possible to support the school financially, by providing a small allocation from the SACRE budget to allow the School to purchase its own materials and resources that could be used by future generations. This was discussed further as a part of Agenda item 9.

**Resolved:** That the report and updates be noted.

## **6. NASACRE Update**

The NASACRE (the National Association of SACRE's) regularly held national meetings and conferences to which members of SACRE were invited and encouraged to attend. The Chair and Adviser had recently attended a National Conference on 22 May 23, at Fishmongers Hall in London. This was the first face to face conference since COVID-19. This was also the 30th anniversary conference. The Chair and Adviser provided the SACRE with an update of the items that were discussed throughout the conference.

At the conference a number of award ceremonies were held to celebrate people who had made significant contributions to SACRES over the years. Preb. Michael Metcalf (the Chair of the Staffordshire SACRE) had been nominated, and it was announced at the ceremony that he had received an award in the category of "SACRE member who has made a significant impact in your area". Following this announcement Michael was presented with a certificate and voucher to commemorate this award at the Staffordshire SACRE meeting held on the 28 June 23.

It was raised that Humanists UK had recently won a test case regarding the appointment of Humanists to Committee A of SACREs. It had therefore, now been ruled unlawful to prevent Humanists from joining a SACRE. This landmark ruling would not affect the Staffordshire SACRE as the Staffordshire Humanist organisation had held a seat on the SACRE for some time.

**Resolved:** That the NASACRE update be noted.

## **7. RE Hubs**

An email had been distributed to all SACRE members on behalf of RE-Hubs UK informing them that a new RE Hub website had been launched.

The purpose of the website was to provide Religious Education (RE), Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE), and Religion & Worldviews (R&W)

support to teachers and practitioners in the UK. The mission of the RE-Hubs was to connect those who could provide resources with those who needed them. They aimed to create a neutral platform that brought stakeholders together, filling the knowledge gap and equipping everyone within the RE/RVE/R&W ecosystem.

SACRE members were asked to provide feedback which could be submitted to RE-Hubs UK to help them to continue to improve and develop the website. The following comments were made:

It was noted that there was a list of NATRE local groups, but no SACREs were included. In response to a query raised asking whether SACREs should be included in the local groups section of the webpage, it was explained that it may have been the case that the organisation had assumed schools knew that all areas had a local SACRE. Whilst it was acknowledged that this may have been the case, it was suggested that including the contact details of the local SACRE on this forum might also be helpful to teachers and practitioners.

It was asked whether the local RE-Hub would offer an artefact and resource facility, similar to that which used to be available within Staffordshire, and was used to supply schools with a range of differing artefacts that supported RE learning. It was noted that a resource centre link was included on the RE Hub, but the information was currently limited to Birmingham museums and Hereford Diocesan resource Centre. It was explained that, as the RE-Hub was a new venture, it was very likely the organisations offering resources would increase as schools became aware of the service.

## **8. The SACRE Budget 2023-2024**

Members were provided with a final account of the 2022/23 budget. They were informed that, whilst there appeared to be a £4,780.00 underspend, this was due to the fact Entrust had yet to invoice for some workshops that had been delivered.

A further discussion took place regarding the proposed allocation of £200.00 from the SACRE Budget to Flash Ley Primary School, to allow them to purchase their own teaching materials and resources to support the delivery of Religious Education.

Members were also informed that, of the budget of £6,590.00 that was available to the SACRE for 2023/24, the following commitments had been made:

- MEAS workshops - £500.00 per day x 8 days = £4,000.00 (16 workshops)

- Support for schools for planning 4 x £450.00 = £1,800.00
- £200.00 Allocation for support for RE resources from Flash Ley Primary School (as discussed in agenda item 6 of the meeting)

**Resolved:** a. That the final SACRE Budget for 2022-2023, be noted.

b. That the commitments to the SACRE Budget for 2023-2024, be noted.

c. That the allocation of £200.00 to support Flash Ley Primary School access RE resources, be approved.

## 9. Development Plan 2023-24

The Development Plan was presented to the SACRE. The SACRE advisor explained the objectives, activities, and the RAG rating which estimated the success of each objective. It was noted that all of actions were now green.

A discussion took place to determine new actions for the 2023 / 2024 timeframe. The following actions and areas for further development from September 2023 were agreed:

- More information from school leaders in person regarding RE in their schools- guest speakers to attend from November 2023 onwards.
- Provide further example planning and resources for schools.
- Provide a vehicle to celebrate RE in schools- e.g. Spirited Arts competition.
- Provide new members of SACRE with basic information on their roles.
- Update SACRE members on current developments in RE.
- Monitor delivery of the Agreed Syllabus.
- Resume monitoring of Collective Worship and report to SACRE.
- Monitor GCSE and A level results.
- Succession planning.

**Resolved:** a. That the actions for the 2023/2024 Development Plan be agreed.

## 10. Applications for variation of practice

There were no applications made on this occasion.

## **11. Dates of next meetings**

Dates of the next meetings were conformed as:

- 15th November 2023
- 7th February 2024
- 26th June 2024

All meetings commence at 2:00pm unless otherwise stated.

**Resolved:** That the dates of the next meetings be noted.

**Chair**