

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Wednesday, 15th October, 2014.

Present:-

Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Julie Siddiqi (Chair), Abbas-Bowkan, Elbrow, Nainu, and Sohal

Committee 2 – Church of England

Rev Andrew Allen, Christine Isles, Andrea Sparrow

Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations

Linda Lewis, Lynda Bussley

Committee 4 – Representatives of the LEA

Councillors Brooker, Cheema, Rana

Other - Jo Fageant – Professional Advisor

PART 1

11. Apologies for Absence

None.

12. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 14th July 2014

Resolved - that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2014 be approved as a correct record.

13. Welcome from Iqra School and Introductions

Mr Zafar Ali, Foundation Governor/Chair of Trustees, welcomed the members of SACRE to Iqra Primary School and gave a brief presentation on the history of the school, its ethos, and its objectives.

Members thanked Mr Ali for his presentation, and for hosting the SACRE meeting.

14. Matters Arising from Minutes

None.

15. Update on SACRE Membership 2014/15

Members discussed the position regarding the current SACRE membership and an update on the actions taken to fill the vacancies was provided.

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Islam: It was confirmed that three nominations for the two current Islamic vacancies had been received, with one vacancy subsequently being withdrawn. The three nominations had been invited to attend the SACRE meeting of 14th July, though only one had attended. The attendee, Mr Waqar Bhatti, had presented a brief outline of his experience and how he felt he could contribute to SACRE moving forward. Mr Bhatti, present at the SACRE meeting of 15th October, was welcomed to SACRE, and it was agreed that his nomination be put forward for confirmation by Council at its next meeting.

Judaism: Jo Fageant confirmed she would continue to attempt to source nominations for this vacancy.

C of E: Jo Fageant confirmed that she would continue to attempt to source a replacement to fill this position.

It was confirmed that Councillor P.K. Mann had been appointed to the SACRE in error, as the constitution stated that a Cabinet Member could not be appointed to SACRE. In effect, this meant that there remained a vacancy for a Local Authority representative, and a nomination from the Labour group would be sought at the next Council meeting.

Councillor Cheema raised the topic of Sikh representatives to SACRE, and requested that the number of Sikh representatives be raised from 2 to 4. However, it was confirmed that the representative numbers per group were set proportionately to the population demographic of Slough as a town, and that the Sikh positions were filled.

16. Academies and SACRE-Robin Crofts

Robin Crofts, Director of Education, introduced a report advising SACRE members on their role as it pertains to Academy schools.

Mr Crofts confirmed that Free Schools were Academies in law and had the same requirement to provide RE and collective worship.

Under the terms of their Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, all Academies had to provide RE for all their pupils, except for those whose parents exercise the right of withdrawal. The type of RE specified in the Funding Agreement depended on whether or not the Academy had a religious designation, and for converter Academies, on whether the predecessor school was a voluntary controlled (VC), Voluntary aided (VA) or foundation school.

Other than for Academies where the predecessor school was a VC or foundation school, the model funding agreement specified that an academy with a religious designation must provide RE in accordance with the tenets of the particular faith specified in the designation. They may, in addition, provide RE that is in line with a locally agreed syllabus and teach about other faiths if they choose.

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SACRE was advised that they had a statutory remit to advise the Local Authority on Religious Education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus and to support the effective provision of collective worship. SACRE also had within its powers to discuss any matter related to its functions as it sees fit and may therefore include the provision of RE in Academies in its discussions or address such matters as may be referred to it. An Academy or group of academies can be represented through co-option onto the local SACRE (or indeed any SACRE) if all parties are in agreement.

However, SACRE no longer had a role to monitor RE in Academies or advise the Local Authority about RE in them.

Members of SACRE discussed the report, and were mindful of the fact that SACRE was not required to monitor RE in academies. However, it was felt that SACRE could continue to offer support, should academies feel this would be useful. For example, chargeable training could be offered.

17. SACRE Annual Report

Jo Fageant, Professional Advisor, advised that by law, SACREs have to publish an annual report confirming what actions have been taken during the last preceding year. However, the format of such a report is not set. As such, Ms Fageant tabled a draft report, designed to be shorter and more easily digestible whilst still giving an accurate reflection of SACRE's work over the past 12 months.

Members praised the length and conciseness of the report, and felt that this shorter, more concentrated report format would help the information to be more easily reviewed and assimilated. Members were particularly enthused about the section detailing the work of SACRE moving forward, and were eager to begin making full use of the services offered by the newly appointed Professional Advisor.

Members suggested that the finalised report be forwarded to Religious Education Co-ordinators at Slough schools alongside the SACRE newsletter. It was also confirmed that the finalised report would be published on the NASACRE website.

In addition, it was requested that the clerk of the meeting confirm the SACRE membership and attendance records for period 2013-14, and forward this confirmation to Ms Fageant.

Resolved – that the new report format be approved for publication, subject to confirmation of membership/attendance as above.

18. Collective Worship Briefing Paper- Jo Fageant

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next SACRE meeting.

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19. Newsletter-Jo Fageant

Jo Fageant, Professional Advisor, introduced a draft version of the proposed newsletter to members of the SACRE, and comments were requested.

Members felt that the newsletter was a very positive addition to the work of SACRE moving forward, and were eager to begin using it to interact regularly with schools. In order to facilitate this, delivery methods were discussed. It was agreed that Robin Crofts would begin to source contact details for school Religious Education Co-ordinators so that the newsletter could be sent digitally, directly to the most relevant person. In addition, a hardcopy would also be sent so that the newsletter could be displayed on school notice boards. The cost to print and send these hardcopies would come out of the SACRE annual budget.

SACRE members discussed ideas for further topics for inclusion, examples of which included the potential for a group photo of the SACRE, and a set section to showcase a particular faith school. Members were also requested to email Ms Fageant with ideas for any further items to be included in the newsletter.

The newsletter would also include Ms Fageant's contact details so that schools could get in touch to request support, or to share ideas or examples of best practice.

Resolved – that the newsletter draft be approved for publication. Members to forward any further suggestions for items to be included on future newsletters to Jo Fageant via email.

20. Places of Worship-Update

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next SACRE meeting.

21. SACRE Working Groups/ Committees

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next SACRE meeting.

22. Budget, Ring Fencing & Z-Code

Robin Crofts, Director of Education, confirmed that the £1,300.00 unused by the Montem School RE Trail had been secured, and was now in a SACRE account to be Z-Coded. It was confirmed that this money would be transferred over to the SACRE budget year on year until such time as it was spent.

The SACRE budget for 2014/15 was confirmed as £5,000.00, elapsing on 31st March 2015. It was highlighted that SACRE did not have to spend the entirety of this budget, though if unspent, remaining money would not roll over to the

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following year's budget, the exception to this being the £1,300.00 Montem money that had been ring-fenced.

23. SACRE- Future Actions

The question of when the SACRE Chair and Vice-Chair should be elected was raised. It was pointed out that in previous years, this took place during the first meeting of the new academic year. However, for SACRE 2014/15, the Chair and Vice-Chair were elected during the first meeting of the new municipal year.

In addition, the 3 year membership term for SACRE was raised in relation to Slough Borough Council's practise of electing Councillors by thirds. It was pointed out that an elected Councillor, appointed to SACRE, may not be present for the full 3 years of their SACRE membership term, should they not be elected at subsequent Council elections.

It was also felt that the number of SACRE meetings that members were required to be absent for, before having their membership revoked, was too high.

Members agreed that the above items would be discussed at the next SACRE meeting as part of a Constitution/Terms of Reference review.

It was confirmed that the joint SACRE meeting would be held in November, and feedback from this meeting would be included in the next SACRE meeting.

It was requested that SACRE members bring examples of the 'Discover RE' resource packs and similar, as it was felt that it would be useful for members to see what each pack contained.

24. Dates of Next Meetings

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday, 26th February 2014. The venue was to be agreed closer to the meeting date.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 6.35 pm)