

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Thursday, 26th February, 2015.

Present:-

Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Julie Siddiqi (Chair), Waqar Bhatti, Zubayr Abbas-Bowkan, Sue Elbrow, Ashpreet Singh Nainu, and Hardip Singh Sohal

Committee 2 – Church of England

Rev Andrew Allen, Christine Isles, and Andrea Sparrow

Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations

Linda Lewis and Lynda Bussley

Committee 4 – Representatives of the LEA

Councillors Ajaib, Brooker, Cheema and Rana

Other

Jo Fageant – Professional Advisor

PART 1

25. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

26. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 15th October 2015

Resolved - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 15th October 2015 be approved as a correct record.

27. Matters Arising from Minutes

None.

28. SACRE Member News - Julie Siddiqi

Julie Siddiqi introduced the SACRE Member News item, and explained that this was to be a new standing item brought to each subsequent meeting of SACRE.

The purpose of the item was for SACRE members to advise on what had occurred, or what tasks had been undertaken, between SACRE meetings.

Jo Fageant advised SACRE that Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, had recently written to SACREs highlighting, among other things, the importance of reaffirming the values of respect and tolerance in all schools. NASACRE had subsequently written to SACREs advising that SACREs should discuss the letter and its implications for their own Local

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Authorities, before writing a response. It was recommended that SACRE's response should include:

- Thanks for the letter;
- Support for the proposal to commission an analysis of Annual Reports and produce a report about SACREs nationally on that basis;
- A confirmation that SACRE members are not volunteers but appointed members of a statutory body and, that whilst they offer much to their local authorities (LA) in terms of social and cultural capital, their main purpose is to advise the LA on religious education and collective worship;
- A question for the Under Secretary of State how the Department for Education is going to hold local authorities to account in relation to their responsibilities to support and resource SACREs;
- A question for the Under Secretary of State about the relationship SACRE should have with Academies and Free Schools in light of the Academies Commission Report 2013 where local authorities are seen to be the champion of children and young people and therefore advocates for a broad and balanced curriculum, including RE which is the only curriculum responsibility of LA.

Jo Fageant advised that a copy of Lord Nash's letter would be forwarded to all SACRE members. In addition, the date of the next NASACRE AGM was confirmed as being 21st May 2015.

Finally, Ms Fageant confirmed that she would be retiring as of 31st March, though would remain in her role as Professional Advisor for Slough SACRE.

Christine Isles advised SACRE on 'Open The Book' - an organisation of volunteers who attended schools and performed stories of the Bible for the children. The group was highly recommended, and the Council was advised to review whether the group could be used at their own schools.

Councillor Preston Brooker advised that he had recently been made a Church Governor at Churchmead School.

29. SACRE Membership Update - Democratic Services

The Clerk introduced a summary of current SACRE Membership, highlighting the remaining vacancies to be filled. Members advised that they were

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continuing to actively attempt to fill the vacancies, but to date had been unsuccessful.

Lynda Bussley confirmed that she had emailed the Association of School and College Leaders requesting nominations, though had yet to receive a response. The importance of recruiting locally, rather than regionally, was highlighted.

Victoria Hall was confirmed as having emigrated to Dubai, and so would no longer be able to attend SACRE. A new vacancy for Church of England representation was therefore confirmed.

30. Constitution/Terms of Reference review - Democratic Services

The clerk introduced a report on the SACRE Terms of Reference, following questions raised at the previous SACRE meeting.

SACRE members had sought clarity on the following points:

1. Election of SACRE Chair and Vice Chair

It was highlighted that in previous years, the election of the Chair and Vice Chair had taken place at the first meeting of the new Academic year. It was confirmed that Local Authority Members were appointed to SACRE at the Annual Council meeting, held in May. The subsequent meeting of SACRE following the Annual Council was therefore the first meeting of the new municipal year, and the Chair and vice Chair were elected at this meeting.

2. Appointment of LA Members by thirds may mean they would not be present for the standard three year term of SACRE membership.

It was confirmed that Local Authority Members were selected for appointment to meetings, such as SACRE, during a Group meeting prior to the Annual Council. During this meeting, meeting preferences could be stated and volunteers could be sought. As this occurred annually, elected Members were confirmed as a member of SACRE for a period of 1 year only. Thereafter, the process would be undertaken again, at the subsequent years Group meeting. At this time, it may be that the same Members would be appointed to SACRE for a further year, or there may be new Members appointed, based on Member availability and preference.

3. The number of meetings required to be missed before SACRE membership was revoked.

The Terms of Reference confirmed that “where a nominated representative fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the SACRE and fails to give their apologies, s/he shall cease to be a member of the SACRE and the nominating body shall be invited to nominate another representative.”

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The clerk confirmed that, whilst attendance at SACRE had been an issue in the past, a review of recent meetings showed that attendance was now very good. In addition, it was felt that as there were only three meetings in each municipal year, it would be somewhat premature to instigate the revocation of membership process after one or two missed meetings, for which a member may have valid reasons for absence.

31. Joint SACRE Meeting Feedback - Julie Siddiqi

Julie Siddiqi introduced a summary of the Regional Joint SACRE meetings that she had attended since the last meeting of Slough SACRE. During the meetings, discussions were held around the sharing of resources, as well as projects to take forward.

It was confirmed that one such project had been teacher visits, accompanied by a professional photographer, to places of worship in Reading and Wokingham. Photos of the sites were taken and had been distributed to all schools in the area as ready-made teaching aids.

The feasibility of carrying out the same exercise within East Berkshire was now being reviewed. It was likely that such an undertaking would require the use of a minibus, but that the same photographer could be used.

Additional training of hosts at the places of worship was also discussed, which would include the creation of shared documentation including shared booking forms or hosting guidelines setting out what learning outcomes were to be achieved from the visit. Funding for this had been applied for, for a final decision at a forthcoming Trustees meeting on 27th March. If this bid proved to be unsuccessful it was agreed that each of the attending SACREs could contribute a portion out of their annual budget. This was likely to be a portion of the total figure of approximately £2,000.00. In preparation, Robin Crofts was requested to confirm the remaining SACRE budget to the Chair by email.

With regard to the sharing of RE Resources, it was confirmed that St Mary's C of E School had a significant collection of religious resources, but that it was in need of cataloguing before such resources could be made available. Ashpreet Singh Nainu and Waqar Bhatti agreed to liaise with Linda Lewis to undertake a cataloguing exercise.

32. Collective Worship Briefing Paper- Jo Fageant

Jo Fageant, Professional Advisor, introduced a paper designed to provide guidance on Collective Worship to schools. Feedback to the paper was sought.

It was confirmed that Collective Worship remained a legal requirement for schools, though not all schools were adhering to the requirement. Ofsted would likely review this and make comment on it during any inspection. It was noted that the Policy listed a requirement of Collective Worship to be "broadly Christian in character" and it was confirmed that schools could apply for a

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determination should they not wish to deliver Collective Worship in this manner.

The question of how SACRE could help support Islamic Collective Worship in schools was raised, particularly for important rituals held on Fridays. It was confirmed that this would be separate from Collective Worship, which was designed to be broadly generic and encompass many different faiths. However, it was confirmed that schools often made a particular classroom or space available as a 'quiet room' where students or staff could undertake their own acts of worship. It was agreed that further guidance on this would be added to the next SACRE School Newsletter by Jo Fageant.

Feedback to the paper was positive, though it was requested that the document be condensed, retaining the policy itself. It was also requested that a list of approved external people who could deliver and run acts of Collective Worship be added. The request was received favourably, though it was noted that any such list would need to be rigorously maintained to avoid becoming obsolete. It was agreed that this list be added to the guidance paper, and that Julie Siddiqi be added as a main contact, responsible for the maintenance of the list.

33. Places of Worship Update - Jo Fageant

It was confirmed that the topic of Places of Worship had been discussed as part of item 7 – Joint SACRE Meeting feedback.

34. SACRE Working Groups/ Committees - Jo Fageant

Jo Fageant, Professional Advisor, confirmed that NASACRE had recommended that SACREs could form sub committees to act on projects between meetings. Such sub committees would need to be quorate, and therefore would require the attendance from one member of each of the 4 Committee groups.

It was agreed that a sub committee be formed, comprising of Councillor Preston Brooker, Lynda Bussley, Andrea Sparrow and Waqar Bhatti. The sub committee would arrange to meet once before the next meeting of SACRE, to discuss the work plan for SACRE moving forward. It was confirmed that this meeting would be hosted by Lynda Bussley, at Montem Primary School Jo Fageant would also attend.

35. Discover RE - Jo Fageant

A Discover RE resource pack was brought to the meeting for members to review. SACRE noted the resource available within the Discover RE package. However, the Discover RE Newsletter was recognised as containing inaccuracies that were concerning – for example, the link to the Sikh religion included details on Hindu gods etc.

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36. SACRE- Future Actions

Future actions of the SACRE were discussed, and confirmed as follows:

1. Jo Fageant was to email the group the draft of the next SACRE Newsletter, for comment, with the aim of forwarding the final version to schools before the end of the Summer term.
2. Jo Fageant was to email details of a forthcoming RE meeting on 9th March to Lynda Bussley, so that she may attend.
3. Robin Crofts/Neil Fraser were to review SBC's position in relation to the current SACRE website. The potential for building and maintaining a new website separate from Slough's main site was discussed. It was understood that the cost for such an endeavour would need to come out of the SACRE budget. Robin Crofts/Neil Fraser were tasked to provide an update to the Chair and Professional Advisor as soon as possible.

37. Date of Next Meeting - TBA

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as being Wednesday, 10th June. A venue was to be determined closer to the meeting date.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 6.40 pm)