

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Wednesday, 10th February, 2010.

Present:-

Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Igan Hayati – Baha'i Faith
Sue Elbrow – Free Churches
Jo Osbourne - Judaism

Committee 2 – Church of England

Alan Bignell
Christine Isles
Andrew Allen
Jo Fageant

Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations

Lynda Bussley – JTUC (NUT)

Committee 4 – Representatives of the LEA

Councillor Maclsaac

Also Present: Annie Keighley, Senior Adviser, Standards and Achievement and Claire Gray (Clerk)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Coad and Mann and Mr L Khan

PART I

8. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 14th October, 2009 were approved as a correct record.

9. Matters Arising

Schools RE Advisor - Members were informed that the RE advisor was not able to attend the SACRE meeting as there was a clash with another meeting.

NASACRE Newsletter - It was noted that the NASACRE Executive was developing a new self evaluation document. Members were asked whether they had ever used the existing self evaluation material as the new document would be released from September 2010. To enable its use in target setting for the coming academic year.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 10.02.10

10. Membership Update

The Clerk to the SACRE advised members on the current situation regarding membership. All members who had poor attendance records had been sent a letter reminding them of the date of the next SACRE and advising them of the importance of representation of all faith groups. It was further noted that there was recently poor representation from the Teaching Unions and Members suggested that schools be approached on this as soon as possible.

Furthermore due to the attendance issues that had arisen members requested that an amendment be made to the Constitution for Slough SACRE to include the possibility of ending a members' term of office if they have failed to attend three consecutive meetings without providing apologies.

Resolved:- That the following paragraphs be added to the Constitution for Slough SACRE:

'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 provided that:

- (a) the Clerk to the SACRE has advised the member in writing of the provision of this clause following the second missed meeting and at least a 10 working days before the third meeting.
- (b) SACRE does not decide to disapply this rule for reasons of extenuating circumstances.'

11. Applications for Renewal of Determinations

Montem Primary School - The Panel were advised that a request for a renewal of the determination granted to Montem Primary School on acts of collective worship had been received. However, the SACRE was informed that the Senior Advisor, Standards and Achievement had not been able to undertake a visit to the school to observe an act of collective worship as was best practice in Slough when deciding upon a determination. A member expressed some concern that in the application form it had been recorded that the type of collective worship the school wished to undertake was based on 'cross religious themes highlighting faiths so that children can learn about other faiths', as collective worship should not be used for the purposes of teaching as would take place in RE lessons. Another member suggested that this was more likely to be a misrepresentation of what would actually take place at the school. The Senior Advisor was asked to ensure that this was not happening in order to cover any shortfall in the provision of religious education. Members agreed that they were happy to grant the determination providing that the observational visit by the Senior Advisor provide a satisfactory outcome

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 10.02.10

James Elliman Primary School - Members were informed that a second application for a renewal of a determination was received from James Elliman Primary School. It was noted that due to the timing of the SACRE meeting and the School's Governors meeting the school had not been able to provide a copy of the minutes to demonstrate that the governors approved the determination. However, Members agreed to approve the determination subject to governor approval and a satisfactory visit by the Senior Advisor.

There was an ensuing discussion concerning faith schools and the requirements to provide an Act of Collective Worship it was noted that the majority of faith schools in Slough were Voluntary Aided and were therefore exempt from applying for a determination. Members particularly asked about the arrangements at Iqra School and it was noted that there were approximately 8 children across a range of ages who were withdrawn from collective worship at Iqra. It was noted that the Area Dean had visited the school in order to provide Christian worship and religious education to these children. Teachers present at the SACRE meeting advised of the difficulties created when withdrawing children from RE lessons and collective worship.

Resolved – (a) That the renewal of the determination for Montem Primary School be approved subject to a satisfactory visit taking place by the Senior Advisor, Standards and Achievement.

(b) That the renewal of the determination for James Elliman Primary School be approved subject to a satisfactory visit taking place by the Senior Advisor, Standards and Achievement and a copy of the minutes being submitted showing the approval for the determination by the Governors.

12. Report on visit to an RE lesson

The Vice-Chair advised that she had visited a Year 10 RE lesson at Wexham Secondary School. The teacher taking the lesson had not been advised of the visit until the day in question and therefore had not made any particular arrangements. Members were advised of the various different aspects of the lesson and that the school was following a different exam syllabus for the first time. Members were advised that this was part of a series of lessons and that the pupils appeared to be interested in the work.

The Senior Advisor requested that SACRE be clear on the protocols for further visits. The Chair advised that members must recognise on what basis schools were visited and that it would be a good idea to continue with visits if at all possible. The Vice-Chair asked if information was available on what exam syllabuses were used as this would help in providing resources. The Senior Advisor agreed to obtain this information. It was suggested that it may be useful to have a proforma for questions which could be made available to the teachers who had volunteered to host a SACRE visit. There were currently six teachers who were offering to have SACRE members visit and final arrangements needed to be agreed. Members agreed that there should

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 10.02.10

be a maximum of two to three members per visit and that if possible there should be an opportunity to talk to teachers following the lesson in order to communicate ideas and share information. The Vice-Chair noted that overall visiting the RE lesson was a positive experience and it would be good to see how the class were progressing.

Resolved – That further visits to RE lessons be arranged, taking into account the suggestions raised by the SACRE where possible.

13. Slough Religious Studies Centre Update

The Vice-Chair advised that the RE Centre had moved to the new premises sooner than expected. SACRE members were invited to visit the RE Centre immediately prior to the next meeting and the meeting would then take place at Iqra Primary School. It was noted that virtually everything that needed to be was out on display and the RE Centre did not have to leave any stock behind. There was currently computer access available in the RE Centre. However, the telephone line was currently downstairs and an answer machine was in operation which would be checked by RE centre staff. There were also some teething problems regarding access, although it was felt that these would be dealt with in partnership with Iqra School.

14. Use of SACRE Funds to Support Schools

Youth SACRE - The SACRE considered whether there was capacity both financially and in terms of personnel to take forward the proposal of a youth SACRE and also considered what the SACRE hoped to achieve by conducting a Youth SACRE. Members considered whether there were other ways to best support RE in schools. A Member felt that a number of Youth SACREs did not achieve very much in terms of supporting RE and also advised that a number of young people had commented that a Youth SACRE was a nice idea but did not feel that they had sufficient time to attend, especially those preparing for exams. Members suggested that a one-off event, possibly in connection with Creative Partnerships to address the issue of community cohesion would be more appropriate. There was some discussion on the most appropriate age group to take part and a number of members felt that pupils at the end of primary school may have more time to contribute than older pupils. The Chair suggested a structured event in the summer term focusing on issues of community cohesion. However it was noted that this was usually a busy time for year 6 pupils. The SACRE agreed that a one-off event would be more beneficial than establishing a continuous programme. It was suggested that a small group meet in order to roll forward ideas as these needed to be firmed up quickly. The items which needed to be decided on were the age range of pupils, the focus of the event and the timing.

Resolved: - That a one-off conference was preferred and that Jo Fageant, Andrew Allen, Jo Osbourne and Egan Hayati would meet to take this forward.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 10.02.10

RE Newsletter - The Chair advised that there was further funding available in the SACRE budget and suggested that this could be used to produce a newsletter for all schools on RE in Slough. It was noted that this was something that every school could be provided with on a termly basis. It was suggested that items could be sent to the Chair at the end of previous term for inclusion in the newsletter. A Member asked about the possibility of including a list of forthcoming religious festivals in each newsletter. However, it was felt that this was difficult due to the limited space available and the number of festivals. A Member suggested that there should be a by-line on every issue with a mission statement regarding the work of SACRE in order to raise awareness amongst teachers. It was noted that several amendments were needed for the draft newsletter but once these were completed it would be distributed to Slough schools via email and hard copy. It was suggested that this should be placed on staff notice boards and should have an eye catching front page. SACRE was advised that Issue 2 would go out 2-3 weeks after the Easter break and that any items should be sent to the Chair or Vice-Chair.

Resolved: - That the draft copy of the Newsletter should be distributed as Issue 1 once the appropriate amendments were made and that further issues of the newsletter should be distributed at the beginning of each school term.

Remaining Funding - It was suggested that any remaining funding could be used to provide a training course for the RE syllabus. It was suggested that there were a number of new teachers who were not aware of the locally agreed syllabus and that perhaps this could be conducted as part of newly qualified teacher course as RE was not an area that teachers were generally very confident about. It was suggested that the RE centre should also be involved in this. The Chair noted her support of a course but advised that this needed to move on before the end of the financial year

Resolved: - That the possibility of establishing training for the RE syllabus be followed up in terms of available funding following the distribution of the newsletter and it be determined whether any additional funding was available.

15. Joint SACREs Conference 2010 - Update on plans for 15 June

The Chair advised that the Joint SACRE conference was due to take place on the 15th June and this year would be considering a completely different topic regarding RE trial. Members were reminded that Slough paid for five delegates even if only 2 or 3 attended and that it was important for Slough to fill all of their places if possible. Members were strongly encouraged to set aside this date to attend.

16. LOtC (Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge)

Members were advised of a new scheme where different organisations could apply for a quality badge which showed that they provided a good learning environment outside of the classroom. This was mainly drawn to the attention of members of Groups 1 and 2 regarding what their places of worship could offer. A Member advised that St Mary's Church was already registered for

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 10.02.10

this but there was some difficulty in completing application forms due to the terminology used and requested help if anyone could provide it. Members of SACRE agreed that the use of this in Slough should be endorsed.

Resolved – That Slough SACRE endorse the use of the LOtC Quality Badge for places of worship in the Borough.

17. Any Other Business

Recent Publications - The Chair drew the SACRE's attention to two important documents which had recently been published; one was a rewrite of circular 194 and the other was the REN-Statutory Guidance 2010 which was available from teachernet. It was noted that there was a new RE programme of learning in the primary curriculum. It was important that teachers were not confused by this and realised that they were required to deliver the Slough RE syllabus. It was noted that there would be an update on this in the next Newsletter.

QCDA NASACRE Conference - Members were advised that a QCDA NASACRE Conference was taking place on the primary curriculum and there was one free place available for each SACRE. This would be taking place on the 24th March and it was agreed that Sue Elbrow would attend and that if she was unavailable Lynda Bussley would attend as a substitute. A follow-up to this would be considered at the next meeting.

18. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday, 9th June and Iqra Primary School was suggested as the desired location.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 6.23 pm)