

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TUESDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2013

PRESENT:-

Group A: Christian Denominations and Other Religions or Religious Denominations	Mr David Burbidge (Baptist Church), Mr Mark Cawte (Methodist Church, Chair), Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte (United Reformed Church), Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical Network) and Mr Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community)
Group B: Church of England	Miss Janet French, Reverend Norma McKemey, Ms Steph Mundin and Mrs Penny Summers
Group C: Teacher Organisations	Mrs Tracy Mason, Miss Lottie Rowe - Vice-Chair, Mrs Mandy Sandleton and Mr Paul Sunners
Group D: Councillors	Councillors Fay Howard, James Robbins, Alan Bishop and Fionuala Foley
Also in attendance:	Katy Staples (SACRE Advisor)

Apologies for absence were received from Reverend Beth Brown, Ms Mel Shepherd, Ms Catherine Lomax, Mr M S Khan, Mr Tony McAteer, Sarah Foulkes and Councillor John Haines

22. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

23. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

24. Chair's Announcements

The Chair referred to two letters received from the Religious Education Council about the Provision and Training of Religious Education: Guidance for Governing Bodies of Primary Schools and Secondary Schools. The letters highlighted the findings and recommendations contained in the report 'Religious Education the Truth Unmasked' following a recent inquiry held by the All Party Parliamentary Group for RE.

The SACRE noted that separate letters for Primary and Secondary Schools had been prepared by the Religious Education Council and it was suggested that information about Swindon SACRE should be attached to the letters being sent to the Governing Bodies.

25. Membership Update

The SACRE considered a report of the SACRE Advisor and Director of Law and Democratic Services about proposed changes in the membership of SACRE.

The Director of Law and Democratic Services reminded SACRE that at their last meeting on 1 October 2013 they had asked officers to approach the British Humanist Association for a representative to serve as a co-opted member on SACRE. The SACRE also recommended to Council, which was agreed at the Council meeting held on 7 November 2013, that the representation for Group A be increased by an additional two representatives from the Buddhist faith and Jewish faith. The Chair suggested that the SACRE constitution should be updated to include the revised number of representatives for Group A.

The SACRE were informed that the British Humanist Association had been contacted and following consultation with Swindon Humanists appointed a co-opted representative. The Chairman reported that he had been on contact with the local Buddhist organisation and the Jewish Board of Deputies seeking a representative and was waiting for a response.

It was noted that there were still three teacher vacancies and SACRE were encouraged to fill the places.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted
2. That the decision by Council to increase the representation of Group A by 2 additional representatives from the Buddhist and Jewish faiths be noted.
3. That the Swindon SACRE constitution be amended to incorporate the changes at '2' above, as follows:
 - a. Page 3, Section 3, paragraph 3.2.2 (i), line one to read:

GROUP A Representatives from the (non-Christian) five other key world faiths and five further representatives of such Christian Denominations (other than.....

26. Minutes

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013, be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to minute 21 referring to SACRE in place of SCARE on the first line of the minute.

27. Example of Good Practice from RE in a Swindon School

The SACRE received a report from Steph Munding, St Francis C of E VA School and Church of England representative about how the school monitors the progress of pupils in RE, as an example of good practice.

Steph explained that the school followed the agreed RE syllabus for Swindon and that the subject was taught exclusively by teachers rather than a combination of teacher and teaching assistants. Assessments were undertaken in a variety of

ways including the use of floor books with work undertaken by the pupils, completion of assessments sheets, electronic tracker assessment undertaken three times a year to compare the attainment level for RE against, for example the levels attained for literacy to give a more comprehensive picture.

In considering the report, SACRE made a number of comments and raised issues, in particular:

- Attainment levels were shared with key stage two pupils but not those at key stage 1
- Outside resources are used and a number of representatives of the various faiths help to support lessons
- The tracking system was analysed and assessed in conjunction with a trained assessor. It was noted that children were achieving levels in line with the levels achieved for literacy
- It was felt that comparisons were needed between the standard of RE teaching in faith schools and non-faith schools
- Examples of good practice had been presented at Clusters meetings and attendees were encouraged to take the examples on board and apply them at their schools

The Chair thanked Steph for her report.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

28. RE Ofsted Report: Realising the Potential

The SACRE Advisor spoke about a recent report produced by Ofsted called Religious Education: Realising the Potential.

The report explained that the past 10 years had seen some improvements in RE in schools, that more pupils had recognised its value and that the range and quality of resources to support teaching the subject had improved. However, evidence from the majority of schools visited for the survey showed that the subject's potential was still not being fully realised.

The SACRE split into groups to respond to a number of questions about the report and any actions arising from the report for Swindon schools and for SACRE. The points raised and responses to questions are attached at appendix 1 to the minutes.

Resolved:

That the Ofsted report be noted.

29. Feedback from RE Best Practice Clusters

The SACRE received a report from the SACRE Advisor on the recent Best Practice Cluster meetings.

The SACRE Advisor explained that the Primary Cluster meeting was very positive with main topic for discussion being 'top tips for making RE a great subject in

school'. Fourteen different schools attended the Cluster meeting and the SACRE Advisor shared examples of best practice in relation to RE and lesson ideas to increase the questioning in schools.

Resolved:

That the comments of the SACRE Advisor be noted.

30. REC RE Review

The SACRE received a report from the SACRE Advisor about a review undertaken by the RE Council of England and Wales as part of its strategic plan to enable the RE Community to adjust to the major changes being made to education in England by the Coalition government.

The SACRE Advisor explained that the Review provided (i) a non-statutory national curriculum framework for RE to complement the new national curriculum programmes of study resulting from the DfE's review of the school curriculum, in which RE was not included and (ii) an analysis of the wider context in which RE found itself, including the opportunities and challenges that faced the implementation of the new curriculum framework.

The SACRE split into groups to respond to a number of questions about the report and any actions arising from the report for Swindon schools and for SACRE.

Resolved:

That the report from the SACRE Advisor be noted.

31. Progress Report from Sub-Committees

The SACRE Advisor reported on the recent activities of the SACRE Sub-Committees that were set up at the last meeting:

- a) 'How can we Promote SACRE More Effectively' Sub-Committee
This Sub-Committee met on 19 November 2013 and considered the reasons why SACRE should be promoted in Swindon, what information would be included in any communication and how would it be said.

The Chair reported that he had been looking at how the SACRE web site could be updated to make it more relevant and contain all the SACRE information in one place. He asked the SACRE to let him know of anyone who had experience of developing webpages.

A number of actions came out of the meeting that would be followed up before the next meeting on 28 January 2014.

- b) Developing New Distinctively Local Swindon Units of Work Sub-Committee
This Sub-Committee was due to meet on 27 November 2013 but due to unforeseen circumstances did not go ahead. A further meeting was being arranged to meet before the next SACRE meeting in March 2014.

32. Feedback from Members Representing SACRE on other Bodies

The SACRE received a report from Paul Sunners, who represented the SACRE on the Swindon Borough Council Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Paul explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee amongst other duties scrutinised education in Swindon. The last meeting of the Committee received a report from the Youth Forum commenting on the United Kingdom Youth Parliament national campaign around 'A curriculum to prepare us for life'. The campaign called for a review of the curriculum which would put the skills and knowledge young people needed for an increasingly competitive world at its heart.

The SACRE noted that seven and possibly nine secondary headteachers had signed up to this campaign, along with nearly 1,000 signatures from young people who supported it. It was suggested that the SACRE strongly support the Youth Parliament campaigns as an opportunity to enhance the role of RE further.

Resolved:

That the report from Paul Sunners be noted.

33. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of SACRE would be held on Tuesday 18 March 2014, commencing at 6:00pm at a venue to be agreed.

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Discussion prompts for Agenda item 8

Ofsted : Realising the Potential

<p>Disagree - not helpful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakness – Leadership and management – but no direct recommendation on that • Don't believe that the recommendations will have the desired outcome • Ofsted framework not including RE • Pg 9 Item 4 – teaching of Christianity is the weakest aspect • Cluster meetings are very helpful • Over emphasis on enquiry • Not enough about academies 	<p>Agree - good point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the relationship between LA's and SACRE • Review • Sufficient Resources • Partnering • Confusion about the purpose of RE • Confusion about EBacc • EBacc leading to a decline in RE provision • Pg 6 – last bullet point - Lack of Commitment by DfE to RE has resulted in a lower commitment by schools • DfE should work with professional associations • Not enough training for teachers RE needs some specialist teaching – not just left to TAs • Key weaknesses picked out well
<p>Actions for Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all principles of improvement are included with School Improvement Plans • Weakness in teachers understanding raising the profile and importance of School Improvement Plans • Unclear about teaching RE • Assessment in RE is inadequate • Unclear how to proceed • Linking in with rest of the curriculum 	<p>Actions for SACRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to school leaders to highlight Ofsted report and suggest it goes on the School Improvement Plans • Support we give continues e.g. cluster meetings • Raise profile and importance of RE for development • SACRE to use report to argue for greater support by LA to RE (in maintained schools) especially support for Cluster Groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use RE for developing cross-curricula learning skills • RE has been diluted • No specialist teachers – need investment in teachers • Continue with GCSE syllabus and give more time to teach RE • Subject expertise at primary • Better lesson planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby parliament for a national curriculum • Provide more examples of leitled work for assessment • Swindon RE conference • Put more pressure for schools key stage 4 • Sufficient resources?
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