

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TUESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2014

PRESENT:-

Group A:
Christian Denominations and
Other Religions or Religious
Denominations

Mr David Burbidge (Baptist Church), Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte (United Reformed Church), Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical Alliance) and Mr Tony McAteer (Catholic Community)

Group B:
Church of England

Group C:
Teacher Organisations

Mrs Tracy Mason, Mrs Lottie O'Brien (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Paul Sunners

Group D:
Councillors

Councillors James Robbins, Alan Bishop, Cindy Matthews and Gemma McCracken

Co-opted: Freddy Pound (Swindon Humanists)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Gurchoran Singh Lyal, Miss Janet French, Reverend Norma McKemey, Ms Steph Mordin, Mrs Penny Summers, Mrs Mandy Sandleton, Mrs Mel Shepherd, Ms Catherine Lomax, Mr M S Khan, Mr Dinesh Patel, Katy Staples, Sarah Foulkes and Councillor Fionuala Foley

67. Welcome from Commonweal School

1. RE at Commonweal School
The Vice-Chair, Lottie O'Brien, welcomed the SACRE to The Commonweal School and spoke about the school's approach to RE.

Lottie gave an example of a typical year 7 lesson and explained how the school delivered Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 with pupils moving from more traditional teaching of RE in KS3, where essential skills would be developed, to KS4 which dealt with religious questions from philosophical and ethical perspectives.

The SACRE thanked Lottie for a very informative presentation.

2. Curriculum for Life

Paul Sunners reported that he had attended a recent Health, Adult and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HACS) as a co-opted representative of SACRE. Paul explained that one part of the HACS agenda related to an issue raised by the Swindon Members of the Youth Parliament about 'Review your school' which questioned what appropriate 'life skills' young people felt they needed in preparation for life after education.

Paul asked SACRE to consider a short paper he had prepared on the above issue and whether it was relevant to the local SACRE.

It was suggested that this could be an agenda item for the next meeting of SACRE, therefore allowing members the time to read the paper and an opportunity to prepare appropriate questions and responses.

68. 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.

69. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

70. Chair's Announcements

1. The Chair reported that the South West Conference for SACRE's would be held on Monday 16th March 2015 at Dillington House, Illminster.

Sarah Lane Cawte expressed an interest in attending the conference on behalf of Swindon SACRE.

Resolved: That Sarah Lane Cawte be nominated as Swindon SACRE representative at the South West Conference for SACRE's.

2. The Chair reported that Katy Staples, SACRE Advisor, was unwell and would not be attending the meeting. It was suggested that agenda item numbers 8 and 9 be deferred to the next meeting of SACRE as Katy would have been leading on these two items.

Resolved: That agenda item numbers 8 and 9 be deferred until the next meeting of SACRE on 10th March 2015.

71. Minutes and Matters Arising

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

72. Changes to GCSE/A Level Consultation

The SACRE considered a Department of Education consultation document on changes to the subject content for religious studies GCSE, AS and A level.

The consultation document highlighted that the government was reforming GCSEs and A levels to ensure that they prepared students better for further and higher education and for employment. The new GCSEs would set expectations which matched those of the highest performing countries and the new A levels would be linear qualifications that ensured students developed skills and knowledge needed for progression to undergraduate study.

The main change to RE GCSE was the expectation that all students must study two religions; however, students would have the option to spend up to three quarters of their time studying one religion. It was hoped that this would ensure all students had a well-rounded education that led to a rigorous qualification through grounding in religion, religions and belief. A number of changes had also been made to RE A level to rebalance the breadth and depth of the subject content to support students progressing to higher education.

The consultation document detailed two options for study, with option 1 allowing 50% study of religions and 50% thematic studies and option 2 allowing 75% study of religions and 25% thematic studies. SACRE members felt that faith schools may well choose option 2 whilst other schools could choose option 1 for study. There was a concern that the proposed structure could put additional pressure on teachers and students especially as students would have to recall a lot of factual information for the exams. It was also noted that Humanism was not part of the subject content being consulted upon. SACRE considered that it was important for students to have a broad understanding of other world views, including Humanism, in addition to the main world religions being studied for GCSE. Questions were raised about whether the A level content would build on the study of the GCSE course undertaken by students. It was noted that, in general, the groups being consulted in relation to the A level content appeared to be happy with the proposals.

The Chair encouraged SACRE members to access the consultation document on-line and make comments before the deadline of 29th December 2014.

Resolved: That the consultation document on changes to the subject content for religious studies GCSE, AS and A level be noted and SACRE members be encouraged to access the consultation document on-line and make comments before the deadline of 29th December 2014.

73. The Development Plan 2015-2017

Resolved: That consideration of the Development Plan 2015-17 be deferred until the next meeting of SACRE on 10th March 2015.

74. Religious Education Beyond Levels Discussion

Resolved: That consideration of the discussion led activity be deferred until the next meeting of SACRE on 10th March 2015.

75. Feedback from RE Teachers' Network Meetings

The Chair reported that the recent Secondary RE Teachers Network meeting discussed the proposed changes to the GCSE RE subject content.

76. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of SACRE would be held on 10th March 2015 at Gorse Hill Baptist Church, Cricklade Road, Swindon SN2 1AA.