

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TUESDAY, 23 JULY 2019

PRESENT:-

Group A: Christian Denominations and Other Religions or Religious Denominations	Jo Backus (Buddhist Community) David Burbidge (Baptist Church) Clare-Marie Burchall (Roman Catholic Community) Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical Alliance) Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community)
Group B: Church of England	Reverend Norma McKemey and Ruth Williams
Group C: Teacher Organisations	Emma McCarthy and Tracy Mason
Group D: Councillors	Councillors Fay Howard and Bazil Solomon
Co-Opted:	Jo Garton

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Matthew Courtliff, Oladapo Ibitoye and Garry Perkins and Malkit Babbra, Reverend Clive Deverell, Attif Ghafar, Michelle Howard, Fidelma Meehan and Lottie O'Brien.

1. Appointment of Chair

Resolved – That Councillor Fay Howard be Chair of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved – That Emma McCarthy be Vice-Chair of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

3. Declarations of Interest

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

4. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

5. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2019, be confirmed and signed as a correct record

6.

Matters arising not on the agenda

The SACRE Advisor advised that:

- a) Action 32, Point 5 (That the SACRE Advisor be requested to write to Headteachers and Chair of Trustees of the schools to request an update on the work undertaken by them with those pupils not officially entered for GCSE and A Level RE exams) - This will be undertaken after the engagement of Gill Dickinson from Bristol who would be able to support Swindon schools after her retirement from teaching in July 2019.
- b) Action 32, Point 6, (That the Annual Report be forwarded to all schools and academies in Swindon to heighten the awareness of the Swindon SACRE work within the borough. Action) - This will be circulated in the autumn as part of the website checking programme.
- c) Action 33, Point 1 (Jo Garton to visit Southfield School to assist them with updating the RE content on their website) – This will be undertaken in the autumn.

The SACRE Advisor circulated a letter of thanks from Kingsdown Academy to the Chair of the SACRE for the support made available to the school to ensure compliance with its legal duty when offering students Religious Education and access to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development and Assemblies (Collective Worship). The SACRE agreed that this was evidence of the successful review of schools' websites undertaken by the group and to schools' appreciation of the review.

Resolved – That the School Advisor liaises with Jo Garton regarding school's visits aimed at updating RE content on schools' website.

7.

Membership

The SACRE Advisor discussed membership and explained that the SACRE constitution included reference to non-attendance. The Committee voiced their concern regarding the lack of regular attendance by some members. The Committee further noted that Sarah Foulkes no longer worked at the Council and that nominations would be sought from the Council to replace her on the SACRE.

Resolved – (1) That enquiries be made to determine who would be replacing Sarah Foulkes on the SACRE.

(2) That the SACRE Advisor and Clerk continue to seek a nomination from the Jewish community to the vacancy on Group A (Christian Denominations and other Religions or Religious Denominations).

(3) That Helen Redhead be appointed to serve on the SACRE as a member of Group C (Teacher Associations).

(4) That the Clerk be requested to enquire if Mandy Sandleton wanted to continue to serve on the Committee.

8.

Key Stage 4 Religious Education

The SACRE Adviser advised that due to the timing of the meeting, Key Stage 4 Secondary RE teachers teaching Key Stage 4 Religious Education were unable to attend to inform the SACRE on the difficulties they encountered when teaching the subject.

Emma McCarthy advised that Robert Tylee, Course Co-ordinator for Religious Studies at New College, invited the SACRE to New College where he would be able to give a discussion regarding Key Stage 4 Religious Education.

Whilst giving a presentation on Religious Studies at GCSE, the SACRE Advisor reminded members that this was an opportunity to prepare questions for the RE practitioners attending the next meeting. The focus was to be on how SACRE would be able to support them in their Key Stage 4 work following the new Ofsted assessment framework.

The SACRE broke up into working groups to review and discuss the content of the AQA's Religious Education GCSE past papers on Christianity, Islam and Thematic Studies. The SACRE compared exam expectations on children and agreed that a) the papers were more based on rote learning rather than through debate; b) lacked the opportunity for critical thinking, c) assessments were not clearly based on RE content but on English spelling and grammar, d) there was no uniformity between the papers and e) concerns regarding pupil's engagement. Emma McCarthy informed the SACRE on the project she was to be undertaking regarding the use of RE vocabulary across all Key Stages.

The SACRE Advisor elaborated on the new curriculum content, the difficulties faced by school's Senior Leadership Teams and the options available to them to ensure effective delivery of Religious Education in their schools. The SACRE discussed possible reason for the decline in the take-up of Religious Education as a GCSE subject by pupils.

Resolved – (1) That Emma McCarthy be requested to liaise with Robert Tylee and invite him to the next meeting of SACRE which will be held at the Commonweal School.

(2) That the experience of subject leaders regarding teaching Key Stage 4 Religious Education be gathered and be presented to members of Senior Leadership Teams at the next meeting of SACRE.

(3) That Ruth Williams be requested to forward to the SACRE Advisor, questions to be submitted to the Senior Leadership Team at the next meeting.

9. Development Plan

SACRE would encourage schools, academies and colleges to celebrate the religious and cultural diversity found in Swindon.

The following four goals were debated by Members:

- a) Improving standards
 - The SACRE's focus on A levels to improve standards.
 - Undertake a watching brief over the impact of the new Key Stage curriculum on GCSE entries, engagement and attainment.
 - Continued attendance at Hub meetings and conferences.
- b) Effective management of the SACRE with key stakeholders and the Local Authority
 - Annual report to be circulated next year.
 - Continue engagement with Councillors.
 - Discussion with the Head of Education on the future working

relationship between the Local Authority, schools and the SACRE group.

- c) Monitor schools' provision for RE
 - A review of the agreed syllabus.
 - Continue website monitoring for RE content.
 - Offer half day workshops to develop Spiritual, Moral, Social and Culture (SMSC) development through collective worship.
- d) Celebrating the religious and cultural diversity found in Swindon
 - To be achieved through teaching the Agreed Syllabus; monkey survey.
 - Promotion of the WIRE (Widening Inclusivity in Religious Education) Award following the success of this year.
 - Support needed from SACRE members to visit schools and review websites for RE content.

The SACRE Advisor confirmed that Greenmeadow School was the first school to receive the WIRE Award and that the Chair would be presenting the school with a certificate in the autumn.

Resolved – (1) That the SACRE Advisor:

- a) Continue to promote RE conferences as and when available.
- b) Send out a circular to all Swindon schools promoting the WIRE award
- c) Be requested to liaise with the Head of Education regarding Local Authority representation on the SACRE.
- d) Be requested to review the prospect of relaunching the “Parables through Art” project in Swindon.

10. Religious Hub updates and Feedback from LTLRE Conference

The SACRE Advisor gave feedback regarding the South West SACRE Conference held in June 2019. Emma McCarthy then elaborated on the Hub meetings since the last SACRE meeting that included a) a Humanism session held in November 2018 which was led by Jo Garton, b) a Hub leader training undertaken in December 2018 in Bristol led by the SACRE Advisor and c) Katherine Taylor's session on reflective story telling held in March 2019.

She confirmed that Adam Robertson was invited to the next Hub meeting to be held on the 10th October where he would be discussing the new Ofsted framework.

Resolved – (1) That Emma McCarthy be requested to circulate dates and information regarding the next Hub meetings to SACRE members.

(2) That the SACRE Advisor be requested to circulate further information regarding the next SACRE conference (RE to Save the Planet) to be held in January 2020.

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the SACRE would be on 26th November 2019 at The Commonweal School, The Mall, Swindon SN1 4JE.