

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 2019

PRESENT:-

Group A:
Christian Denominations and
Other Religions or Religious
Denominations

Jo Backus (Buddhist Community),
David Burbidge (Baptist Church)
Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical
Alliance)
Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community)

Group B:
Church of England

Reverend Clive Deverell
Reverend Norma McKemey

Group C:
Teacher Organisations

Tracy Mason (NUT)
Emma McCarthy (NUSUWT)
Helen Redhead (Headteacher)

Group D:
Councillors

Councillor Fay Howard
Councillor Nick Martin

Also in attendance:

Jo Garton (Swindon Humanist)
Katy Staples (SACRE Advisor)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Matthew Courtliff, Barbara Parry and Roger Smith.

Clare-Marie Burchall, Ruth Williams, Malkit Babbra, Janet French, Lottie O'Brien, Ms Michelle Howard, Peter Nathan (Head of Education) and Sarah Foulkes (School Improvement Advisor).

27. Welcome from the Chair

Mr Steve Henderson, retired Baptist minister welcomed the SACRE to Gorse Hill Baptist Church and advised on the history of the Baptist Church and the beliefs and work of Gorse Hill Baptist Church in particular. He circulated information regarding the basis of the Baptist Union.

Resolved – (1) That Mr Steve Henderson be thanked for his interesting presentation

(2) That Mr David Burbidge be thanked for hosting the SACRE meeting.

28. 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.

29. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

30. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2018, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

31. Minutes from the last agenda and matters arising not on the agenda

The SACRE were advised that further to Minute 21, the CoRE report was available on the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) website: Report: Commission on RE Final Report: Religion and Worldviews The Way Forward - <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/useful-documents>

32. Annual Report and forthcoming actions from the Annual Report

The SACRE received its draft Annual Report, along with an updated Chair's introduction, covering the period September 2017 to August 2018. (<http://www.nasacre.org.uk/reports> - Swindon)

The Annual Report covered the following points:

- SACRE's funding and administration issues
- Agreed syllabus for RE in Swindon.
- Support for schools through advising, training teachers and governors in RE.
- The Annual RE Conference.
- Best Practice Forum.
- Learn, Teach, Lead RE Conference.
- Monitoring of RE Provision in Swindon.
- Public examination results.
- South West Regional SACRE conference.
- Statutory Matters.
- Membership.

The SACRE Advisor referred to the increase in numbers of Swindon pupils undertaking GCSE in Religious Studies whereas at "A" Level, the number of pupils entered for any Religious Studies or Religious education qualification had gone down. The SACRE noted how schools in other local authorities had debated on balancing study time allocated to RE against time allocated to other core subjects.

Following the presentation, the SACRE discussed the following issues:

- The contact time for RE education at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Exam content for Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Ways of registering concerns regarding the reduction in both RE contact time and pupils' entry for a Religions Studies qualification.
- The skills needed to teach RE following changes to the RE curriculum by the Department for Education.
- Disparity in the number of pupils undertaking RE qualifications between

academies within the same schools' federation.

- The focus of the new Ofsted framework when assessing RE in schools.
- Comparison of Swindon's RE "A" Level results against national data.
- The opportunity for schools to benefit from Jill Dickenson (retired teacher) support to improve RE exam results.
- The differences of teaching RE in schools, with some schools teaching RE as an academic subject with a programme of study and others through Person Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education.
- Ways of ensuring schools met minimum requirements when teaching RE.

The SACRE was informed that the Annual Report would be submitted to the NASACRE with a copy to all schools and academies.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a future meeting of the SACRE be held at Commonweal School.

(3) That secondary RE teacher representatives be invited at the next SACRE meeting to give a presentation regarding their experience of teaching Religious Education in secondary schools particularly focusing on Key Stage 4.

(4) That a copy of a previous RE exam paper be circulated to the group before the next meeting of the SACRE.

(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.

(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.

(7) That the SACRE Advisor be thanked for her work in the preparation of the Annual Report.

33. Website checking and subsequent impact

The Chair confirmed that following a meeting with the SACRE Advisor regarding review of schools' websites for RE content, schools were advised regarding their compliance responsibilities. The SACRE was informed of the positive feedback from schools resulting from this exercise and updated on the overall actions being undertaken by schools. It was noted that overall, schools' governors welcomed the involvement from the SACRE who brought this matter to their attention. The SACRE Advisor confirmed that headteachers were aware of the criteria being used to ensure full compliance. It was noted that SACRE would have to continue challenging and supporting schools to ensure full compliance by all Swindon schools.

Resolved – Jo Garton to visit Southfield School to assist them with updating the RE content on their website.

(2) That members contact the SACRE Advisor if they wish to support this initiative by visiting schools to help them with updating RE content on their website.

34. Development Plan

The SACRE received the updated Swindon SACRE Development Plan 2019-21, which was being further developed to take into account the suggested vision statement and goals for Swindon SACRE.

The SACRE considered the goals for development that included (a) how to improve standards in RE; b) how to ensure the effective management of the SACRE with key stakeholders and the Local Authority; c) how the SACRE would monitor schools' provision for RE and collective worship as well as ensuring schools take into consideration the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and d) how SACRE would encourage schools, academies and colleges to celebrate the religious and cultural diversity found in Swindon.

The following suggestions for the four goals were debated by members:

- a) Improving standards
 - Focus on A levels to improve standards
 - Review impact of new curriculum on GCSE entries
 - Continued attendance at Hub meetings and conferences
- b) Effective management of the SACRE with key stakeholders and the Local Authority
 - Circulate final annual report to stakeholders
 - Continue engagement with Councillors
 - Discussion with the head of Education on the future working relationship between the Local Authority and the SACRE group
- c) Monitor schools' provision for RE
 - A review of the agreed syllabus
 - Pupil Voice
 - Continue website monitoring for RE content.
 - Offer half day workshops to develop Spiritual, Moral, Social and Culture (SMSC) through collective worship.
- d) Celebrating the religious and cultural diversity found in Swindon.
 - Promotion of the WIRE award
 - Support needed from SACRE members to visit schools and review websites for RE content.

Resolved – That the next meeting of the SACRE would focus on the GCSE curriculum.

(2) That the Chair be requested to contact the head of Education regarding the future working relationship between the group and the Local Authority.

(3) That further to (2) above, the Head of Education be invited to the next meeting to update members of the group on the way forward between the SACRE and the local Authority.

35. Feedback from the RE Conference, the Dillington SACRE conference and Hub meetings

The SACRE received feedback regarding the RE Conference and the Dillington SACRE conference. The SACRE reviewed the report on the South Gloucestershire and Bristol SACREs' RE Conference held on 25th January 2019 that a number of teachers from Swindon attended. Emma McCarthy elaborated on the workshops held on the day. The SACRE noted that the Conference aimed to assist and provide teachers of RE with material and ideas to connect RE to the British Values agenda and to make learning more enjoyable and creative. The report highlighted the positive feedback received from delegates attending the conference. She further explained that this was an excellent opportunity for networking.

Jo Backus had attended the South West SACRE Conference at Dillington House, and she reported back on key national developments, including updates on the speeches by key notes speaker, particularly Joyce Miller (Commissioner for Religious Education) and Rudi Lockhart (CEO of the Religious Education Council). The SACRE noted that delegates felt that whilst positive work was being undertaken, there were still concerns regarding the future of SACRE and how changes in the structure would impact the national picture of monitoring schools' compliances with religious education. Jo Backus also referred to Deborah Weston who drew delegates' attention to ways of promoting the work of SACRE to ensure future funding.

The SACRE Advisor confirmed that she also attended the above conference as part of the Bristol SACRE group as they were running a workshop at the conference. This related to how schools were to address the recent increase of parents deciding to withdraw their child from attending religious education or places of worship.

Resolved – (1) That the document presented by Deborah Weston be circulated to the SACRE members before the next meeting.

(2) That the SACRE Advisor be requested to bring a copy of the handouts that the Bristol SACRE circulated at the Dillington Conference, at a future meeting of the group.

36. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

That the timetable of meetings of the SACRE in 2019/20 would be:

- 23rd July 2019
- 26th November 2019
- 3rd March 2020

The next meeting will be held on 23rd July 2019 at 6.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2 at the Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon.