

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

TUESDAY, 10th FEBRUARY, 2004

PRESENT:-

Group A: Councillors	Councillors Brenda Craven and Phillip Steele.
Group B: Church of England	Catherine Coster (Advisor to the SACRE), Ann Ormston and Penny Summers.
Group C: Teacher Organisations	Jan Criddle, Andrew Fleet, Tracy Mason and Emma McCarthy.
Group D: Other Faiths	Mr. Jaswant Singh Grewal (Sikh Community), Reverend Paul Knight (Baptist), Mr. Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community), and Helen Thomas (United Reformed Church).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: - Jean Samuel (Acting Assistant Director - School Improvement), Andrew Ferguson (Head of Litigation and Personal Services) and Sarah Lawrence (Committee Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Dickinson and Chris Van Roon, The Venerable Alan Hawker, Paul Noble, David Easter, Norma McKemey, Sarah Lashmar, Reverend David Howell, Jillian Hopes and Dr Marilyn Tew.

MINUTES FOR REPORT

24. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

25. Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved – That, the minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2003, be accepted as a correct record.

26. SACRE Constitution Working Group

The SACRE received for consideration the Minutes of the SACRE Constitution Working Group of 20th January 2004 recommending changes to the SACRE constitution and a tabled briefing note from the Director of Law and Corporate Governance recommending adjustments to those recommendations.

Resolved – 1) That the Director of Education be requested to investigate the proportionate strength of denominations and religions in the area for the composition of Group 'D' 'Other Faiths', and report back to the SACRE;

2) That the Chair and Vice-Chair of SACRE shall be appointed annually by the SACRE from among the representative members, with the role of Vice-Chair to be appointed from a different Representative Group than the Chair.

(An amendment to the motion to state that when the Chair of the SACRE is not a Councillor representative, then the position of Vice-Chair be held by a member of Group 'A', was lost by 3 group votes to 1).

3) That the Director of Law and Corporate Governance be requested to bring to the next meeting of SACRE a revised Constitution document for consideration, incorporating the advice to be given by the Director of Education in respect of i) above, the provisions for the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair as set out at ii) above, and subject to the amendments agreed resulting from the tabled advice of the Director of Law and Corporate Governance, including simplification of the wording of Constitution where possible in respect of use of substitutes and the validity of proceedings.

27. Religious Education and Special Needs

Tracy Mason of Crowdys Hill School gave a presentation on the teaching of RE to children with Special Needs. She explained that she taught pupils aged 11 to 16 years with moderate to complex learning difficulties, with each pupil receiving 35 minutes a week religious education. Tracy confirmed that the teaching was similar to other schools, but that she made greater use of practical implements such as artefacts, ICT, videos, and discussion, to help the pupils to understand beliefs, values and traditions. Tracy gave examples of some of the current topics her pupils were covering, and how she approached the formal assessment of abilities.

Resolved – That Tracy Mason be thanked for her excellent presentation.

28. SACRE Budget

The SACRE received an oral report of Jean Samuel, Acting Assistant Director for School Improvement on the SACRE Budget. This could be broken down into the cost of 17 days (or equivalent) to fund the employment of Catherine Coster as the SACRE advisor, plus an annual budget of £5,000 to support her work in relation to development of materials, the training courses organised for teachers and other activities in support of SACRE.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

29. Development Plan 2004/05

The SACRE received for consideration the Development Plan 2003 for the SACRE, drawn up following discussions at the last meeting identifying the SACRE's priorities for 2004/05. The Development Plan contained five targets and showed the breakdown of the £5,000 SACRE budget towards their achievement.

Jean Samuel suggested that in relation to Target 3: Monitoring and Evaluation of Ofsted Reports, the success criteria could be adjusted from '100% of schools judged as 'good' in RE', to seeing an improvement in 100% of schools on their reassessment. In addition, it was suggested that the 'exemplification materials' under Target 3 be provided on the Council's website via the 'Simply Click' facility. Emma McCarthy advised that the Wiltshire SACRE offered for an Advisor such as herself for Wiltshire, or Catherine Coster for Swindon to go into any school which had received an 'unsatisfactory' Ofsted mark, to assist in training or development, funded from the SACRE budget. It was recognised that this could not be accommodated in the SACRE budget this year, but Jean Samuel offered to investigate if it could be supported through the 'Schools Causing Concern' budget.

Catherine Coster informed the SACRE that a visit to the Sikh Temple had been organised for Teachers on 16th March, 6.30 p.m., which SACRE members were welcome to attend.

Resolved - (1) That the Development Plan for 2004/05 be approved, subject to the changes to the success criteria outlined above.

(2) That the Director of Education be requested to investigate if a visit by a SACRE Advisor to schools receiving an 'unsatisfactory' Ofsted Score for Religious Education could be funded from the 'Schools Causing Concern' budget.

(3) That the planned visit to the Sikh Temple on 16th March at 6.30 p.m. be noted.

30. Swindon Annual SACRE Report

Mrs. Catherine Coster presented for information the Swindon Annual SACRE Report for September 2002 to July 2003, which had been submitted to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in accordance with statutory requirements.

Resolved – (1) That the Annual Report be noted.

(2) That Mrs. Catherine Coster be commended for her work on the Annual Report.

31. OFSTED Reports

The SACRE received OFSTED reports in respect of 3 local schools (The Commonweal School, Dorcan Technology College, and Highworth Warneford), one of which showed an 'unsatisfactory' performance but with the capacity to improve, and two which showed a 'satisfactory' performance.

Resolved – (1) That the OFSTED reports be noted; and

(2) That the Chair be requested to write to the schools on behalf of the SACRE to offer encouragement and the support of the SACRE.

32. QCA Conference Notes

The SACRE received, for information, notes of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) Conference, attended by Mrs. Catherine Coster.

Resolved – That the QCA conference notes be noted.

33. NASACRE – Annual General Meeting

The SACRE were informed that the Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) would take place on Tuesday 20th April 2004 at the Methodist International Centre, London. Nominations were required by 26th March 2004.

Resolved – That any SACRE member wishing to attend the NASACRE Annual General Meeting contact Mrs Catherine Coster.

34. Date of the Next Meeting

Resolved – That the next meeting of SACRE scheduled for 30th March 2004, be held at Lethbridge Primary School.