

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TUESDAY, 30 MARCH 2004

PRESENT:-

Group A: Councillors	Councillors Brenda Craven (Chair), Philip Steele and Chris Van Roon
Group B: Church of England	Mrs Catherine Coster, Mrs Penny Summers and Mr. Paul Noble
Group C: Teacher Organisations	Mr Andrew Fleet, Mrs Tracy Mason and Mrs Emma McCarthy
Group D: Other Faiths	Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical Alliance), Mr. Jaswant Singh Grewal (Sikh Community), Reverend Paul Knight (Baptist), Mr M S Khan (Muslim Community), Mr Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community), Father Liam Slattery (Catholic Diocese) and Mrs 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 The Venerable Alan Hawker, Ms Norma McKemey, Mrs Jan Criddle and Mrs Marilyn Tew

35.

Public Question Time

Margaret Griffiths of the Swindon Inter Faith Group submitted a letter to the SACRE dated 30th March 2004, which covered two main issues, stating:

i) That the number of Jews, Baha'i and Quakers in Swindon was each no more than 50 or so, and if she understood the statutory basis of the constitution correctly, this could not justify their inclusion in Group 'D'. That the Buddhists numbers were significantly larger and the SACRE might feel it right to invite a Buddhist to join Group 'D', but that she accepted that there were good reasons for not enlarging the SACRE to a number that could make its procedures unwieldy.

ii) That Buddhism and Judaism are given major time in the syllabus and she would like to know how that accuracy of the syllabus would be guaranteed if these faiths have no representative on the SACRE. Therefore hoped that it could be laid down in the constitution that where a major faith has no representative on the SACRE, that any new proposed syllabus be submitted to a qualified member of that faith, to ensure its factual accuracy. In addition, in the current syllabus, the Baha'i and Quakers received passing mention, but it would be courteous for these communities to see any proposed new syllabus before it was finalised.

Resolved (1) That in respect of i) the matter of the number of representatives in Group 'D' (Other Faiths Group) be discussed as part of Agenda Item 4, 'Revised SACRE Constitution';

(2) That in respect of ii) the advice of the Director of Law and Corporate

Governance be noted that the SACRE constitution cannot be amended to reflect the request as the Agreed Syllabus was prepared by the Agreed Syllabus Conference, a separate legal entity to the SACRE, but that the Conference could be requested to ensure that the relevant consultations took place;

(3) That further to (2) the Agreed Syllabus Conference be requested to ensure that all the necessary consultations take place with religious groups to ensure the accuracy of the Agreed Syllabus; and

(4) That the SACRE seeks to ensure that all relevant religious groups are consulted on any significant piece of work prepared by the SACRE to ensure its accuracy.

36. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2004, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Sarah Lawrence (Committee Officer) advised that further to Item 34, it had not been possible to hold this meeting of the SACRE at Lethbridge Primary School, but that it was planned for the July meeting of SACRE to be held there.

37. Revised SACRE Constitution

The SACRE considered (1) a report of the Director of Law and Corporate Governance dated 18th March 2004 recommending that the SACRE a) adopt the revised Constitution drafted in accordance with the requests from the last meeting and b) give consideration as to whether it was appropriate to seek to revise the number of representatives in Group D (Other Faiths); (2) the views of Margaret Griffiths of the Inter Faith Group; (3) the oral report of the Acting Assistant Director – School Improvement that no additional official information was available as to the breakdown of faith groups in Swindon other than the 2001 census figures; and 4) that Reverend David Howell could obtain some additional information as to composition of the Christian Churches in Swindon if required.

Resolved – (1) That the revised Constitution, attached as Appendix '1' to the Agenda report, be adopted to take effect at the next meeting of SACRE; and

(2) That no change be made to the number or representation of Group 'D' (Other Faiths) representatives currently on the SACRE.

38. Future RE Issues

Catherine Coster (Advisor to the SACRE) circulated a discussion paper on 'Thinking about RE in the Future', including reference to the relationships between Religious Education, Culture and Values, and the aims of the RE teacher. The SACRE discussed some of the themes identified and recognised the importance of communicating with parents the purpose of teaching Religious Education and values and ethics in schools. It was noted that when the Agreed Syllabus Conference was established it would be important for its members to spend time discussing the purpose of Religious Education as the basis for the new Agreed Syllabus.

Resolved – That the discussion paper be noted.

39.

Visit to the Gurdwara

Emma McCarthy reported on the visit to the Gurdwara which had taken place on 16th March. Thirty teachers had attended, the majority of whom were secondary teachers, but with a few primary teachers. Emma thanked the representatives of the Gurdwara for their hospitality, welcome and the informative tour, talk and video which provided an introduction to the Sikh faith. Of particular assistance was an outline of the programmes available for school visits to the temple.

Catherine Coster confirmed that she was seeking to arrange a visit to the Mosque in the near future, and would welcome invitations to other places of worship.

40.

SACRE Membership Update

The SACRE were informed that Jillian Hopes had stepped down as a co-opted member of SACRE having served for more than 4 years.

Resolved – 1) That the Chair write to Jillian Hopes to thank her for her service to the SACRE; and

2) That no replacement co-opted representative be sought at this time, but in accordance with the provisions of the revised constitution co-opted members be appointed in the future as required and to meet a particular purpose, with a maximum of four co-opted members able to serve at any one time.

41.

Ofsted Reports

The SACRE received OFSTED reports in respect of provision of religious education in five local schools (Toothill Primary School, Ferndale Infant School, Moredon Junior School, South Marston CE Primary School and Tregoze Primary School).

Resolved- (1) That the OFSTED reports be noted;

(2) That the Chair write to the schools who had been assessed as 'good' to congratulate them on their performance; and

(3) That the Advisor to the SACRE (Catherine Coster) write to the schools in need of some improvement in their assessment to offer encouragement and the support of the SACRE.

42.

Future Meetings of SACRE

Resolved – (1) That the dates provisionally booked for SACRE in 2004/2005 of 6th July 2004, 28th September 2004, 7th December 2004 and 8th March 2005 be noted; and

(2) That SACRE members inform the Clerk to the SACRE if any of the provisional dates are inconvenient prior to the dates being set by full Council.

Signed at a meeting of SACRE held on 12 July 2004.

Person presiding at meeting at which Minutes signed.