

## **STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**TUESDAY, 27 MARCH 2012**

**PRESENT:-**

<b>Group A:</b> Christian Denominations and Other Religions or Religious Denominations	Mr Arun Bedi (Sikh Community), Mr David Burbidge (Baptist Church), Mr Mark Cawte (Methodist), Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte (United Reformed Church), Reverend David Howell (Swindon Evangelical Alliance), Mr M S Khan (Muslim Community) and Mr Dinesh Patel (Hindu Community)
<b>Group B:</b> Church of England	Miss Janet French, Ms Steph Mundin and Mrs Penny Summers
<b>Group C:</b> Teacher Organisations	Mrs Tracy Mason, Miss Lottie Rowe, Mrs Mandy Sandleton and Mr Paul Sunners
<b>Group D:</b> Councillors	Councillors Doreen Dart, Claire Ellis and Raymond Fisher
Also in attendance:	Katy Staples (SACRE Advisor) and Paddy Bradley

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joe Tray, Reverend Norma McKemey, Mr Tony McAteer and Sarah Foulkes

### **33. Welcome to the Meeting**

Mr Mark Cawte welcomed the SACRE to Emmanuel Church, and gave a brief history of the church.

### **34. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded the SACRE of the need to declare interests. No declarations were made.

### **35. Public Question Time**

No public questions were submitted at the meeting.

### **36. Chair's Announcements**

1. The Chair advised that a pack of letters had been circulated with the SACRE agenda, which were the responses received to a letter from the SACRE to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Education, Local MPs, Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop of York and Bishop of London to raise the profile of RE and concerns about its lack of inclusion in the English Baccalaureate. The SACRE was pleased with the responses received, and wished to continue to promote the importance of RE in schools.

2. The SACRE Advisor had attended the South West SACRE Conference at Dillington House, and she reported back on key national developments, including a study on Pupils' perspective of studying RE, the national picture of the fall in RE examinations, the importance of continuing to support Religious Education in Academies via SACRE, and debates around the national curriculum.
3. The Chair advised that Mrs Penny Summers had acted as the SACRE's representative on the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the last year, and asked for the SACRE to confirm that it would wish her to continue in that role if a representative was required.  
Resolved – That Mrs Penny Summers be nominated as the SACRE's representative on the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2012/13 if one is required.

### **37. Minutes**

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011 be approved as a correct record.

Further to Minute 27, the Clerk advised that Ms Judi Kingdon had decided not to continue with Membership on the SACRE, and therefore there was a further vacancy of the Teacher Associations Group since the last meeting.

### **38. SACRE Annual Report and Development Plan**

The SACRE received its draft Annual Report covering the period September 2010 to August 2011. This had been a particularly busy year for the SACRE in relation to the review of the Agreed Syllabus and Celebrating RE. The SACRE were pleased with the presentation of the Report, and the inclusion of pictures of the SACRE work, and local children's RE. Katy Staples advised that the report would be submitted to the NASACRE, which was collating reports from all SACREs.

The SACRE also received an update on its Development Plan, which would be revised at the next meeting in the light of the Annual Report.

Katy Staples (SACRE Advisor) presented the RE results in the Annual Report, and Paddy Bradley (Director of Schools and Learning) provided a further statistical breakdown to the SACRE and tabled an analysis of the results. He advised that:

- Of the 14 secondary and special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit with eligible pupils in 2010, 11 entered pupils for either the full or short course GCSE in RE. This declined to 9 in 2011.
- Seven schools entered students for both the long and short courses in 2010, but only 3 in 2011.
- In 3 schools, the number of students entered for long courses declined from 2010 to 2011.
- In 7 schools, there was a decline in the number of entries for short courses.
- However, overall there was an increase in the number of students entered for the full course GCSE in RE (323 out of a cohort of 2293, up 1.5%). This was

achieved through noticeable increases at two secondary schools.

- Across Swindon Schools, only 47.4% of students in Swindon were entered into any public examination, and three Swindon secondary schools did not enter any pupils for RE examinations at Key Stage 4 in 2011.

The SACRE discussed the extent to which the importance of RE in schools can be accessed by the choice to carry out examinations. Some members felt that as long as pupils had the opportunity to learn about religious beliefs, whether in formal examinations or through more integrated teaching the method did not matter. Other SACRE Members considered that offering examinations indicated the importance being placed in a school on the subject, and that this was likely to result in better quality teaching support for the subject. It was also difficult for the SACRE to check that schools were offering children the opportunity to study RE, whether formally or informally, and this was something that would need to be explored with head teachers and with academy trusts.

It was requested that a letter be sent to Head Teachers and the Academy Trusts, highlighting the requirement to teach RE, quoting from the letter received from the Minister for Education on the importance of RE, referring to the specific results for the school, and asking for information on how pupils were being access to RE.

It was also asked that a report be presented to Swindon's Children and Young People's Trust Board on access to RE in the Borough.

Resolved – 1) That the draft SACRE Annual Report attached as Appendix '1' to the Report be approved, and the SACRE Advisor be authorised to finalise the report, taking into account comments from the SACRE, and to distribute it to NASACRE and to local schools.

2) That the SACRE note its Development Plan as attached at Appendix '2'.

3) That the Chair of the SACRE, with assistance from the SACRE Advisor and Director of Teaching and Learning, write to Secondary School Head teachers, copied to the academy trusts where appropriate, as set out above.

4) That the Director of Teaching and Learning report to the Children's Trust Board on the SACRE's concerns about how access to RE in the Borough, and include a copy of the SACRE Annual Report.

### **39. Collective Worship Working Party**

The SACRE at its last meeting had set up a Collective Worship Working Party to review the guidance available for Collective Worship in Swindon, in the light of national best practice.

The SACRE Advisor reported back on the work of the Group, which had met on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012. The Working Party had recommended that the new North Somerset guidance provided the best model for Swindon Schools, and permission had been obtained to use and adapt the guidance for local needs. The guidance as adapted was attached at Appendix '1' of the report. It had also been agreed by the Working

Group that a competition should be held, with local pupils being invited to submit wise quotations and inspiring pictures which could be included in the final guidance document.

The SACRE welcomed the document, and thanked that Working Group for its work to date. It was agreed that the Group would meet on one further occasion to finalise the guidance.

Resolved– 1) That the SACRE endorse the recommendation of the Collective Worship Working Party, that the Guidance set out at Appendix 1 to the Report be used as the new Swindon Collective Worship Guidance to be offered to Swindon Schools.

2) That the SACRE Advisor be authorised to complete amendments to the Collective Worship Guidance, in consultation with the Collective Worship Working Party, to include quotations and pictures provided through the competition in local schools, and to promote the finalised Collective Worship Guidance to Swindon Schools.

#### **40. National Developments in RE**

The SACRE received a report on national developments in Religious Education (RE).

The report set out the new Ofsted Framework for school inspections from January 2012, and the specific grade descriptors for RE, and an example of an Ofsted exemplar of Outstanding Secondary Practice in RE.

The SACRE agreed that the descriptors set a very high bar for achievement in RE for schools which in many cases would be aspirational. There was some concern that the exemplar material provided only related to integrated provision of RE, as it was felt that where specialist RE teaching was not available it was more difficult to ensure that the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus were met in an integrated provision. The SACRE was, however, encouraged that Ofsted Inspectors were asking to attend RE lessons as part of their regular inspections.

It was noted that an all-party Parliamentary Group had been set up for the safeguarding of RE, and the SACRE was provided with a copy of a sample letter which could be used as a template to encourage local MPs to join the Group.

Resolved - 1) That the report be noted.

2) That a letter be sent to the Local MPs to encourage them to join the all Parliamentary Group on the safeguarding of RE.

#### **41. Update from Network Meetings**

The SACRE received the minutes of the Humanities, Teaching and Learning Group for RE, and Ms Lottie Rowe reported back on the last meeting. It was noted that it had been a really useful meeting, discussing best practice, ideas and resources for the specific RE examination boards. Ms Katy Staples confirmed that she was hoping to attend and support future meetings of this Group.

Ms Katy Staples reported back on the last meeting of the Primary Network which had met on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012, and had focused on developing spirituality in RE, in particular in the context of the new Ofsted Framework.

Resolved – That the update on the Network Meetings be noted.

#### **42. Future Meetings**

The following meetings of the SACRE for the Municipal Year 2012/13 were expected to be confirmed by Annual Council: 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012, and 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013, with all meetings taking place at 6 pm.

Ms Tracy Mason offered to host a future meeting at Crowdys Hill School and would contact the Clerk to make arrangements.

Ms Lottie Rowe advised that her class was hosting an Interfaith Workshop on 23 May 2012, 1 - 4 pm, and invited members of the SACRE to contact her if they wished to attend.