

## STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

TUESDAY, 18 MARCH 2014

PRESENT:-

**Group A:**  
Christian Denominations and  
Other Religions or Religious  
Denominations

Mr David Burbidge (Baptist Church), 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)

**Group B:**  
Church of England

Miss Janet French, Reverend Norma McKemey and Mrs Penny Summers

**Group C:**  
Teacher Organisations

Miss Lottie Rowe - Vice-Chair, Mrs Mel Shepherd and Mr Paul Sunners

**Group D:**  
Councillors

Councillors James Robbins and Alan Bishop

Co-Opted: Freddy Pound (Swindon Humanists)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fay Howard, Ms Steph Mundin, Reverend Beth Brown, Mrs Tracy Mason, Mrs Mandy Sandleton, Ms Catherine Lomax, Mr Mark Cawte - Chair, Mr Tony McAteer, Councillor Fionuala Foley and Councillor John Haines

### 34. Declarations of Interest

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

### 35. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

### 36. Chair's Announcements

The Vice-Chair made the following announcements:

- a) That Mark Cawte, Chair, was not very well and that she would be taking the Chair for this meeting. The SACRE passed on their best wishes to the Chair.
- b) Freddy Pound, Swindon Humanists was welcomed to his first meeting of SACRE.
- c) SACRE were reminded that two NASACRE briefing papers had been circulated to members. Members were encouraged to read the briefing papers as they contained valuable information.
- d) Informed SACRE that Paul Sunners was attending the South West

### **37. Minutes**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to Mel Shepherd being recorded as 'Mrs' rather than 'Ms' on page one.

### **38. Draft Swindon SACRE Annual Report**

The SACRE received its draft Annual Report, along with the Chair's introduction, covering the period September 2012 to August 2013.

The Annual Report set out the membership, meetings held, challenges and opportunities that lay ahead, standards and quality of Religious Education, examination results data, managing the SACRE and partnership with the local authority and other key stakeholders, the effectiveness of the Local Agreed Syllabus, collective worship and SACRE as a representative in a diverse community.

In considering the Report the following amendments were suggested:

- Page 4 – Group C – Teacher Association Representatives – 'Ms Mel Shepherd' be amended to read 'Mrs Mel Shepherd'
- Page 5 – Challenges and Opportunities that Lie Ahead – 4<sup>th</sup> bullet point to read 'To ensure that the work of SACRE 'is' understood by different stakeholders in Swindon'

The SACRE were informed that the Annual Report once finalised would be submitted to the National Association of SACRE's along with a copy to the Children's Trust Board. The role of the Children's Trust Board was explained by Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy and Attainment.

#### **Resolved:**

1. That the draft SACRE Annual Report be approved, subject to the amendments detailed above, and that the SACRE Advisor be authorised to finalise the report and to submit it to the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).
2. That the draft Annual Report be forwarded to the Swindon Children's Trust Board to heighten the awareness within the Council of the work of Swindon SACRE.

### **39. Swindon SACRE Web Pages**

The SACRE considered a report by the Chair, Mark Cawte suggesting ways in which the Swindon SACRE web page could be reorganised to make Swindon SACRE more visible on the web.

The report indicated that currently there was a page on the Swindon Council

website to access the minutes, agenda and reports and the Local Agreed Syllabus with the Syllabus at a different location on the website. There was a need for a single point of access for the SACRE Committee papers, syllabus and additional information. The report detailed the possible shape of the site, detailed content, presentation, design idea, up-keep, cost and legal implications.

The SACRE expressed appreciation to the Chair for the initial work undertaken and suggested that it needed further consideration especially in relation to the design, existing websites that could host the web page, for example Schools on Line and South West Grid for Learning or a link to Bristol Diocese and publicity.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the Chair, Mark Cawte be thanked for all his excellent hard work in preparing the ground work for the re-organisation of the Swindon SACRE web page
- 2) That the Committee members be asked to investigate various options for the hosting and design of the new website and report back progress to the next meeting.

**40. Religious Education Public Examination Data**

The SACRE considered a report by Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy and Attainment about examination results for Religious Education at GCSE (Key Stage 4) and A-Levels for 2012-13. See minute 38 above.

The report summarised the examination results for Religious Education for 2013. The Head of Economy and Attainment advised that there had been an increase in the number of students entered into public examination for both full and short courses. There was a slight increase in the number of pupils achieving A to C at GCSE and the level was above the national average.

The SACRE noted that there had been a slight decrease in the number of pupils taken A and AS Level (from 67 to 55) and an increase in proportion of A\*-B grades for A level and a slight decrease for AS level. It was noted that the numbers of pupils were small, and therefore it was difficult to compare across years, but overall the level of performance of pupils had generally been maintained over the last few years.

In considering the examination results the SACRE made a number of comments and raised a number of comments, including:

- Historically Swindon had a lower percentage of pupils entered for Religious Education at GCSE level and this was likely to Swindon schools concentrating their efforts on other subjects that required performance data to be made available for inspection
- Concern that the number of hours allocated to teaching Religious Education in some schools was not sufficient, therefore placing additional pressures on teachers in those schools
- Additional information was required about the number of pupils entered for Religious Education at A and AS level, along with comparisons with statistical neighbours

The SACRE Advisor highlighted the importance of schools being aware that pupils had access to Religious Education up to Key Stage 4 and indicated that there was still a need to promote SACRE as Religious Education was a very important subject for pupils to study.

It was suggested that, in order to increase the number of pupils studying and entering Religious Education exams that contact be made with School Student Councils' and the Youth Parliament to establish a forum to investigate what it was like to study Religious Education in Swindon schools.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the summary of Swindon Religious Education Examination Results for 2013 be noted.
- 2) That the Summary be incorporated into the Swindon SACRE Annual Report - see minute 38 above.
- 3) That SACRE continue to support all schools in Swindon in relation to the provision of Religious Education to all pupils and that contact be made with School Student Councils' and the Youth Parliament to establish a forum to investigate what it was like to study Religious Education in Swindon schools.

#### **41. Progress Reports SACRE Working Parties**

The SACRE received updates from the following Working Parties:

- Working Party to develop a strategy and actions to promote the role of Swindon SACRE in schools and academies for Headteachers. Met on 28 January 2014
- Working Party to look at developing new distinctively local Swindon RE units of work for Swindon schools and academies. Met on 5 February 2014

The SACRE Advisor referred to the Promotion of SACRE Working Party and an excellent article written by Steph Mundin about 'What is SACRE?'. SACRE members were encouraged to circulate the article to all faith leaders and community associations.

The SACRE Advisor explained that the Distinctively Local RE Working Party considered issues about a) Swindon Foodbanks, b) How to use your local Church as a resource for RE c) How do Muslims worship in Swindon. It was suggested that an approach to the Youth Parliament and Youth Forum could be of benefit to pupils in Swindon in order to establish what they thought was most important for students in Swindon to study in Religious Education about local beliefs.

SACRE were reminded that, in addition to the main town, Swindon Borough also included a large rural community and that the villages and rural lifestyle would need to be taken into account when considering distinctively local RE.

**Resolved:**

- 1) That the work of the Working Parties be noted
- 2) That Steph Mundin be thanked for the excellent article on 'What is SACRE?'
- 3) That all SACRE members be asked to circulate the article to all faith leaders

and community associations to show the importance of Religious Education to all pupils

#### **42. Feedback from RE Teachers' Network Meetings**

The SACRE received a report from the SACRE Advisor on a recent RE Teachers' Network meeting.

The SACRE Advisor explained that the meeting was very positive with the main topic of discussion being 'Compelling, exciting and reflective RE' and how to assess pupils learning in a creative way.

It was suggested that representatives of the Youth Forum and Schools Council could attend future meetings to discuss ideas about the issues they would like to see included in RE lessons.

#### **Resolved:**

That the comments of the SACRE Advisor be noted

#### **43. Proposal for a Charitable Bid to Support RE in the Area: St Matthias**

The SACRE Advisor spoke about a very successful project undertaken in Cornwall and Devon funded by the St Luke's Charitable trust.

The project's aim was to identify and address unmet needs of RE teachers in Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay and thereby improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes and leadership.

The Diocese of Bristol had proposed to make an application to the St Matthias Trust to undertake a similar project in this area. This project would seek to build the RE leaders and advisers of the future by empowering teachers of religious education to become leaders of RE.

The SACRE Advisor asked for Swindon SACREs support in making the bid and requested RE teachers to complete a survey in order to establish unmet needs.

#### **Resolved:**

- 1) That the application by the Bristol Diocese to the St Matthias Trust to undertake a project in the Swindon and surrounding area be supported.
- 2) That teachers of RE in Swindon be asked to complete a survey to establish unmet needs,

#### **44. Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of SACRE would be held on 17 June 2014, commencing at 6:00pm at a venue to be agreed.