

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 7th March, 2005 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor J. Stone (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. W.U. Attfield, Mrs. C. Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mrs. J. Brown, Dr. D. Goodman, P.E. Harling, Mrs A. Mundy, Mr M. Rollnick and Revd. I. Terry

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ms K. Mayglothing, Ms S. McCamley, Mr Z. Pandor and Mr J. Rendall.

31. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no substitutes.

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th November, 2004, be approved and signed by the Chairman.

33. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

34. OFFICER SUPPORT TO SACRE

SACRE received a report on staffing proposals to service SACRE.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that further to his report to the last meeting, there had been no further progress on the proposal for additional administrative assistance to SACRE by the LEA.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

35. PRESENTATION ON TEACHING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

SACRE received presentations on teaching Religious Education in Special Schools by Mr. Nigel Roberts and Mrs Janet Brown.

Mr Nigel Roberts, Barrs Court School, Hereford, spoke about his experience of teaching pupils at the Special School. He reported that there were many definitions of 'special' pupils as there were many variations of learning difficulties. Many pupils had to learn to cope with experiences in their lives and therefore the teaching plans

to deliver the curriculum were adapted to provide experiences. These may be provided through multi-disciplinary activities such as drama where light, sound, smell and touch could be employed. A number of pupils found some concepts easier to understand by using symbol cards e.g. a card with a smiley face symbol to represent happiness. Alternatively if pupils had difficulty in expressing themselves they may produce a drawing to help convey a feeling or information.

All work used or produced by pupil was kept as a record and used as evidence of the pupil's progression.

Mrs Janet Brown, Blackmarston School, Hereford, spoke about her experience of teaching pupils of between 2½ and 11 years of age who had profound or multiple learning difficulties. Usually there were 10 pupils in a class. She commented that pupils responded better to familiar routines and when teaching RE she started the lesson with a quiet piece of music to create a calming atmosphere. She also linked learning to an experience the child may have had and found that role-play also helped. In this context she showed the meeting the contents of a typical artefact box, which was similar to a primary school story bag, e.g. containing appropriate soft toys and playthings that could be linked to the story. In common with Mr Roberts she also used symbol cards or props to help pupils develop an idea.

Mrs Brown circulated examples of RE teaching plans for KS1 and KS2 and explained that they were based on the Agreed Syllabus and P-Level Attainment Descriptors. Due to the range of pupil abilities a lot of teaching was on a one-to one basis, however, the class did do group work.

Questioned about other teachers' attitudes to teaching RE she felt that confidence and preparation were the key. There seemed to be little or no distinction in the approach to teaching RE between faith or non-faith teachers. In response to whether pupils knew that RE was different to other subjects she commented that she tried to make the delivery of RE distinctive, special and calming.

The Chairman thanked Mr Roberts and Mrs Brown for their informative presentations.

RESOLVED: That the presentations be noted.

36. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE QCA SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SACRE received an overview of issues discussed at the QCA SACRE Annual Conference held in London, 9th December, 2004.

In accordance with a previous resolution the Consultant for Religious Education had represented SACRE at the conference. She reported there had been three main speakers: Graham Langtree, who talked about the present situation and future possibilities regarding the National Non-statutory Framework; Barbara Wintersgill, who talked about the Ofsted inspection of SACREs and what made a good SACRE, and Marion Agombar, who talked about implementing a good RE Syllabus.

She also reported that the Conference had received a draft version of a SACRE self-evaluation tool which had been produced by QCA and Ofsted, with the support of NASACRE. It was intended that this tool would help SACREs reflect on their role and development. This self-evaluation tool is discussed in a later agenda item.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

37. AN EVALUATION OF THE WORK OF SACRES

SACRE were invited to consider issues raised in the OfSTED publication "An evaluation of the Work of SACRES" and the QCA publication "SACRES and Self-evaluation: A Guide".

The Consultant for RE reported that both publications had been referred to at the QCA SACRE Annual Conference, referred to earlier in the agenda. The publication "An evaluation of the work of SACRES", previously issued to Members, had been produced at the request of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to inform his advice about the future policy for religious education and collective worship and inform the continuing debate about the role of SACRES. The SACRE self-evaluation guide, copies of which were issued at the meeting, was designed to help individual SACRES evaluate their role and in particular to consider their impact on pupils learning.

SACRE noted that during the pilot round of Ofsted inspections of SACRES the SACRES concerned had volunteered to be inspected. The second round of inspections would be a more representative cross section.

The Head of School Effectiveness cautioned that, while undertaking the self-assessment, regard needed to be taken as to the size and type of LEA and the resources available to both the LEA and SACRE. He reported that while Herefordshire was in the top 20% of the educational system it was in the bottom quartile for funding, a situation which made it difficult for the Government to justify awarding further funding to Herefordshire.

SACRE agreed that members would study the Ofsted publication and use the self-evaluation tool to undertake their own evaluation of SACRE. This work would be undertaken in preparation for the next meeting when SACRE would discuss how, and in what areas, further development should take place.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and issues arising from the self-evaluations of SACRE be discussed at the next meeting.

38. MONITORING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

SACRE considered a report on the monitoring of Religious Education in Herefordshire schools.

The Consultant for Religious Education reported that she had reviewed the Ofsted inspection reports for 2 Community High Schools and 1 Community Primary School. Her findings were contained in the agenda report. She reported that it had been difficult to obtain meaningful results from such a small sample. However, she highlighted that while both secondary schools had very good RE teaching and learning in KS3, having the benefit of excellent specialist teachers, neither school met the statutory requirements for RE provision in KS4. One of the schools was also failing to meet statutory requirements for RE in the 6th Form. The inspection report on the primary school indicated that the standards of the Agreed Syllabus were being met.

The Consultant for Religious Education also reported that she had undertaken 3 out of 4 planned RE discussion visits to secondary schools to monitor progress and discuss issues. Similar visits by Mr M. Carter to Primary schools were on hold due to illness.

She further reported that anecdotal evidence received during discussions indicated some concern at secondary level about the limited amount of time allocated by some primary schools to RE and the impact this had on progression of learning into the secondary school.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that evidence from previous Ofsted inspection reports, including last years report on discussion visits, indicated that, overall, Herefordshire schools were performing well in the subject. He commented that as the two secondary schools identified regarding the lack of RE provision in KS4 were, in overall terms, good performing schools, it would be challenging for the LEA to impose any sanctions against the schools, particularly in view of the degree of delegation to schools.

It was felt that the tradition of the Chairman writing to the school following the reporting of a school's Ofsted inspection results affirmed the role of the RE teacher(s) and the subject in the school. While this practice would be difficult to continue due to changes in the Ofsted inspection process, SACRE wished to continue the Annual letter of appreciation to schools.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- a) the report be noted and the LEA be requested to closely monitor the situation regarding the meeting of RE requirements in KS4 and 6th Form and;**
 - b) the Annual letter of appreciation by the Chairman to schools concerning their teaching of RE be continued.**

39. EXAMINATION RESULTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES 1999 TO 2004

SACRE were informed of Herefordshire's examination results in Religious Studies for the period 1999 to 2004.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that to assist SACRE in its monitoring role, a graph had been produced (appended to the agenda report) to indicate Herefordshire's examination performance in Religious Studies compared to the national performance. The availability of statistics precluded a comprehensive report. However, the information indicated a satisfactory position, particularly since the introduction of the revised syllabus in September 2001. As further data became available it would be added to the database for future reports.

RESOLVED: That the position be noted and further reports be presented as data became available.

40. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CO-ORDINATORS MEETING - UPDATE

The meeting received an oral report on the RE Co-ordinators meeting held on 30th November, 2004.

The meeting received an oral report on the RE Co-ordinators meeting held on 30th November, 2004. The meeting focused on schools using visitors from faith communities and provided teachers with an opportunity to meet and hear from Mr. Z. Pandor and Mr M. Rollnick from the Muslim and Jewish faith communities respectively. The Consultant for RE reported that the meeting had been well attended and well received. Mr Rollnick commented that he had received little feedback from his presentation to the meeting on the subject of guidance or the availability of experts to give talks to pupils on RE.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

41. AREA WIDE INSPECTION 14-19

SACRE were informed of the Area Wide Inspection of 14 – 19 year old provision across Herefordshire and of SACRE's involvement in the inspection.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that nationally 70 Area Wide inspections had been carried out which had included Herefordshire. In Herefordshire an intense inspection of the provision for 14 to 19 year olds had commenced in September 2004 and had included the Council's partners in the Connexions Service and the Learning and Skills Council. As part of the inspection the Chairman of SACRE had been interviewed. While the final result of the inspection would not be known for some time, the Head of School Effectiveness was cautiously optimistic about the outcome.

He further reported that the Council would be subject to the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment scheme (CPA 2005), to be undertaken in Herefordshire between 26th September, 2005 to 7th October, 2005. Alongside the CPA inspection a Joint Area Review of Services (JARS) for Children and Young People would also be undertaken. A report on the likely involvement of SACRE in the reviews would be presented to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a report on the likely involvement of SACRE in the CPA and JARS inspections be presented to the next meeting.

42. EDUCATION BUDGET FOR 2005/06 - IMPLICATION FOR SACRE

The Head of School Effectiveness reported upon the Education Budget 2005/06 with particular reference to implications for SACRE.

He reported that despite pressures on the overall education budget, the existing budget for SACRE had been maintained. However, a shift in expenditure priorities would be needed to accommodate the anticipated increase in activity due to the Syllabus Review.

RESOLVED: That the position be noted.

43. 2005 SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SACRE received a report on planning for the 2005 Herefordshire SACRE Annual Conference and considered a proposal to use the Conference to launch the new Collective Worship Guidance.

The Consultant for RE submitted a draft programme and timetable for the event for consideration. She highlighted that the theme for the conference would be: "Many religions, many beliefs – exploring religious diversity and respect". She also highlighted that, in a change from previous formats, a number of leading speakers had been invited to take part including Marian Agombar (Chair of NASACRE 2000-2004), Jane Brooke (Chair of NASACRE) and Julia Iprgrave (Senior lecturer in Education, Oxford Brookes University). They had also been invited to take part in a questions forum to be chaired by Mr. Tristram Jenkins, a former Member of SACRE.

In the afternoon, a short session had been allocated for the launch of 'Finding

Treasure' guidance for primary school Collective Worship.

RESOLVED: That the proposed programme and timetable for the Conference be approved.

44. DELEGATE TO NASACRE AGM

SACRE considered sending a delegate to the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) Annual General Meeting to be held at 10.00 a.m. Tuesday 19th April, 2005 at the Council House, Birmingham.

RESOLVED: That Rev I. Terry be the Herefordshire SACRE representative to the 2005 NASACRE AGM.

45. FUTURE MEETING DATES

SACRE noted that future meetings would be held at 2.00 p.m. at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday, 24th June; Monday, 28th November, 2005 and Monday, 20th March, 2006.

The meeting ended at 3.43 p.m.

CHAIRMAN