

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 3rd July, 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor J. Stone (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. C. Ault, Mr. P. Bowen, Mrs. J. Brown, Rev C Marrison, Ms. K. Mayglothling, Mrs A. Mundy and Mr. Z. Pandor

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs W.U. Attfield, Rev. P. Barlow, Cllr P.E. Harling, Mrs S. McCamley, and Mr M. Rollnick and Rev I Terry.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that subject to the insertion of "28th September" into the title for minute number 65 the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March, 2006, be approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

5. WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Chairman welcomed Mr Peter Bowen, as the Church of England representative on Committee B and Rev. Cenydd Maririson OSB, as the Roman Catholic Church representative on Committee A.

6. SIKH FAITH REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEE A

In accordance with SACRE's policy of inviting representatives of other faiths to contribute to the work of SACRE, consideration was given to inviting representation from the Sikh faith.

Having received a very informative presentation from Mr H. Singh at the previous meeting, SACRE decided to recommend to the Local Authority that Mr. H. Singh be invited to become the representative for the Sikh faith.

RESOLVED: That

- a) it be recommended to the Local Authority that the membership of Committee A be extended to include Mr H. Singh as representative from the Sikh faith.
- b) The Clerk be authorised to amend the SACRE Constitution as

necessary.

7. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE 2006 AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SACRE received an update on the introduction of the 2006 Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

The Consultant for Religious Education reported that the Syllabus had been made available to schools in early May. Five training sessions (1 secondary and 4 primary) had been run in different parts of the county to support its introduction. These had focused on: introducing the differences between old and new syllabuses; helping schools to review their long-term lesson plans; provided an opportunity to discuss and question issues arising and to hear about the development of revised schemes of work. She reported that 10 of the 13 high schools and 55 of the 83 primary/special schools had attended. However, it was appreciated that there may have been mitigating circumstances that had precluded them from attending.

While noting the various methods of distributing the Syllabus, SACRE felt that the system could be refined for future years on the basis that a number of outlying schools had found it difficult to attend the Blackfriars Street offices to collect their hard copy version.

In view of the number of schools who had not attended the training, SACRE requested that the Local Authority investigate whether, apart from at the Annual Conference, further training opportunities on the new Syllabus could be offered.

SACRE recorded its thanks to: the Members of the Working Parties who undertook the drafting work; to St. Peters Primary, Bromyard; Marlbrook Primary, Hereford; Ashfield Park, Ross-on-Wye and Weobley High school for hosting the training sessions and to Joyce Mackley for organising, administering and producing the new Syllabus.

RESOLVED:

That a) the report be noted and the Chairman convey SACREs appreciation to the Members of the Working Parties, schools and Joyce Mackley for their part in producing or hosting the training for the new Syllabus.

b) that the Local Authority investigate whether further training opportunities for the implementation of the Syllabus can be provided.

8. SCHEMES OF WORK TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2006 AGREED SYLLABUS

SACRE considered the development of further Religious Education Schemes of Work for primary schools.

The Consultant for Religious Education reported that the 2006 Agreed Syllabus was accompanied by general planning guidance and four KS1 and five KS2 schemes of work. Arising from the Syllabus training sessions it had been identified that 2 further days would be needed by the Working Group to complete the full range of schemes of work to accompany the Agreed Syllabus.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Local Authority that 2 further days be funded to ensure that the provision of schemes of work was

complete.

9. REPORT FROM NASACRE MEETING 4TH MAY 2006

SACRE received a report on the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) meeting held 4th May 2006.

The Lead Primary Inspector reported upon her attendance at the NASACRE Annual Conference and her agenda report highlighted a number of points of interest.

She commented upon aspects of the key note address by Mick Waters, Director Curriculum Division at QCA entitled "Changes to the Curriculum and the place of RE" which had been informative and had raised a number of questions in relation to what SACRE's were trying to achieve; how to get organised learning; challenges and ways forward for SACREs.

SACRE noted the report and particularly debated the issues of raising the profile of SACRE and possible methods of ensuring there was a link between the various activities of the Council, through its work in equality and diversity, and that of the work of schools e.g. as part of PSHE (Personal Social and Health Education), citizenship, art or drama teaching. Arising from this debate it was recommended that the Local Authority be requested to arrange a meeting of relevant sections within the Council, together with representatives of SACRE, to investigate the feasibility of the Council facilitating a multi-faith event for schools.

The Lead Primary Inspector reported that apart from ensuring that the Council had a cohesive approach to the issue, by 'buying-into' such an event, schools would be assisted in meeting elements of their Ofsted inspection requirements in relation to multi-cultural development. It would also help in raising SACREs profile.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and it be recommended that the Local Authority investigate the feasibility of arranging a multi-faith event for schools and report to a future meeting.

10. 2005 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXAMINATION RESULTS - UPDATE

SACRE received a report on the 2005 examination results for Religious Education.

In response to questions raised at the last meeting, the Lead Primary Inspector reported that in the GCSE Religious Studies Full Course (A*-C full course) Herefordshire (78.9%) had exceeded the national results (68.6%) with boys at 71.9% (61.7% nationally) and Girls 83.6% (73.6% nationally). When it came to GCSE Religious Studies Short Course (A*-C short course) Herefordshire (44%) had not performed as well compared to the national results (53.7%) with boys at 34.4% (46.2% nationally) and girls 53.2% (60.9% nationally).

In relation to any discernible trend she reported that the percentage of those achieving A*-C on the Religious Studies full course was slightly lower than in 2004 but higher than 2003. The percentage of those achieving A*-C on the short course was around 13.6% lower than 2004 and 14.5% lower than in 2003 which would indicate a steady downward trend for this course.

The percentage of those achieving A*-C on the A Level Religious Studies short course was 75%, which indicated a fairly steady picture at this level. Results obtained from the Hereford Sixth Form College indicated A2 Level Theology A-B (58.2%) A-C (83.6%). AS Level Theology A-B (64.5%) A-C (82.9%).

SACRE debated the report and questioned issues regarding the percentage of pupils entered for examination; whether pupils and teachers were more committed to achieving the full course; whether any trend could be established from the statistics and how the local results for RE compared to those achieved for other subjects.

The broad role of SACRE was to support the effective provision of RE and Collective Worship in schools. With this in mind SACRE appreciated that there were many ways to use statistics and that the statistical evidence needed to be backed up by evidence of local circumstances. To enable SACRE to form an opinion on the effectiveness of provision, SACRE wished to establish a small set of key indicators that, over time, would indicate any trend in performance. This could then be linked to the other methods of monitoring RE provision and standards discussed later in minute No. 14.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a further report covering the issues now raised be presented to a future meeting.

11. 2006 SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE - UPDATE

SACRE received an update on the organisation for the 2006 SACRE Annual Conference to be held 28th September.

The Consultant for Religious Education reported that arrangements were progressing well with 28 delegates signed up to date. Further to discussion at the last meeting four workshops would be run on the themes of:

1. From the Big Questions to Classroom: by Trevor Cooling;
2. Looking for God in the Classroom with 6 – 10 year olds: by Lat Blaylock;
3. RE in the Foundation stage. The Spiritual In Every Child Matters: by Sue Peasgood and Jonathan Rendall
4. Making Room for Pupils Questions in RE Lessons

It was noted that SACRE Members would not be charged attendance, however, out of school cover would not be paid.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

12. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP GUIDANCE - UPDATE

SACRE received an update on the introduction of the Collective Worship Guidance.

The Chairman reported that organising the drafting and production of the Guidance had been undertaken by Mr Rendall from the Church of England Diocese and, following his recent departure, there was currently a degree of uncertainty over the position regarding its production and launch. He did, however, emphasise that this was an important piece of work and that the guidance must be issued to schools.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended that the Church of England Diocese and the Local Authority progress the production and launch of the Collective Worship Guidance at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

13. REVIEW OF THE SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Consideration was given to reviewing the SACRE Development Plan and the formation of a Working Group to undertake the review.

The Consultant for Religious Education reported that the current Development Plan covered the period 2004-7 and suggested that now would be an opportune time to start the process of revising the Plan. To facilitate the revision she suggested that a Working Group be established to draft a new development plan for the period April 2007 to March 2010. A suggested core membership for the working group was set out in the report with volunteers being invited from the other SACRE membership.

RESOLVED:

- That a) the report be noted and a Review Working Group be established to review the SACRE Development Plan;**
b) the membership of the Review Working Group comprise of
- the Chairman (Cllr J Stone)**
 - Rev I Terry (Diocesan Director of Education)**
 - Volunteer Members from Committees A and C**
 - Bridget Knight (Children's Services Directorate)**
 - Joyce Mackley (Consultant for Religious Education)**
- c) the Review Working Group to draft a SACRE Development Plan for consideration at the 8th December 2006 meeting of SACRE.**

14. SUPPORT, DEVELOP AND MONITOR PROVISION, TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RE IN COUNTY AND VC SCHOOLS AND VA SCHOOLS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH DIOCESAN AUTHORITIES

Consideration was given to supporting the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus and the monitoring of RE provision and standards through the further development of the established practice of school visits.

The Consultant for Religious Education reminded Members that in previous years a sample of primary and secondary schools had been visited to provide support to the school as well as to provide feedback to SACRE on standards and provision in RE.

She suggested that within the limited SACRE budget it was likely that up to 4 schools each term (12 per year in total) could be involved. In previous years the issues explored largely followed the Ofsted framework of the time and integrated some of SACREs agenda issues. She proposed that similar areas be the focus of the 2006-07 visits but adapted to be in line with the school Self-Evaluation criteria.

SACRE noted that while their role was to monitor Religious Education they had no right to enter or inspect schools. The visits would therefore be by invitation and would not be an inspection. However, such visits would provide a good opportunity for the school to discuss issues with the Consultant for RE and for her to provide support to the school and feed back issues to SACRE. It would also provide useful background information against which the RE examination results could be assessed – as discussed under minute No. 10.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the report be noted and it be recommended to the Local Authority that the visits as outlined in the report be implemented; and**
b) a report on the outcome of the visits be reported to a future meeting.

15. REPORT ON THE VISIT BY RABBI DANNY RICH

A report on the visit of Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, had

been submitted by Mr M. Rollnick.

The report set out the Rabbi's busy programme of events for the weekend of the 9th to 12th June. While invited by the Herefordshire Jewish Community to lead the Sabbath service (Oneg Shabbat Service) Rabbi Rich kindly agreed to undertake a series of educational visits to local schools in Herefordshire. During the weekend he visited one Primary school (Broadlands) and four High schools (Aylestone, Wigmore, Hereford Cathedral and Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat) where he gave talks to students, answering the big and ultimate questions, with particular emphasis on suffering and Jewish responses to the Holocaust. Audiences ranged from 25 to 200 students. The report also gave examples of the interesting and inspirational teaching methods adopted by him.

SACRE wish to thank Rabbi Danny Rich for kindly giving up his time during his visit to the County to undertake the educational visits to schools. As a mark of appreciation it was suggested that the Chairman consider making an appropriate donation to Liberal Judaism from the SACRE budget. SACRE also wished to record its thanks to Mr Rollnick for organising the educational programme.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the Chairman convey the appreciation of SACRE to Rabbi Danny Rich for undertaking the programme of educational events; and**
- b) the Chairman be authorised to decide an appropriate donation to Liberal Judaism.**

16. URGENT ITEM

The Chairman decided to allow discussion on the following item on the grounds that it would be expedient to allow officers time to research and prepare an appropriate report.

A Member questioned whether the Local Authority had a policy governing the use of external funding to support the activities of a school namely from Parent Teacher Associations. Concern had been raised that some areas of expenditure e.g. the supply of sports equipment or paying expenses for a visiting artist, were being supported while requests for financial support towards Religious Education expenses were not.

SACRE were concerned about this situation. SACRE questioned what level of training school governors had in relation to the work of SACRE and in dealing with diversity issues. They also questioned whether schools should have their own policy in this respect to ensure equality across all subjects.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended that the Local Authority undertake investigations into this issue and report to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 4.17 a.m.

CHAIRMAN