

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 2nd July, 2007 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor WU Attfield, Mrs. C. Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mr. P. Bowen, Mrs. J. Brown, Councillor P Jones CBE, Miss L Langstaff, Ms. K. Mayglothling, Rev L Rickards and Revd. I. Terry

In attendance: Students from Wigmore High School: Miss L Wells, Miss E Pearson, Master A. Neilson and Master L Vincent.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs A Daniel, Mrs S McCamley, Mr Z Pandor and Mr M Rollnick.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting held 5th March 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

5. SACRE MEMBERSHIP - UPDATE

The Democratic Services Officer updated SACRE on its membership.

He reported that following the May local elections the Council had re-appointed (to Committee D) Councillors: J Stone (Chairman) and Mrs WU Attfield. Councillor Brig P Jones CBE had been appointed to replace Mr P Harling who had not stood for re-election. He also reported that in accordance with SACREs request the Local Authority had appointed Mrs A Daniel as a co-opted member. Notice had been received from Fr. C Marrison that he was unable to continue as the Roman Catholic member (Committee A) and a replacement was being sought. Efforts would continue to obtain a replacement Sikh member.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

6. SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE - UPDATE

Due to transport arrangements and to enable the students to return to school the Chairman agreed to take Agenda Item 8 – SACRE Annual Conference – Update, as

the next item.

The Chairman welcomed Miss L Wells, Miss E Pearson, Master A Neilson and Master L Vincent who were students from Wigmore High School.

Kate Mayglothling explained that a number of Year 10 students from Bordesley Green Girls School, Birmingham, visited Wigmore High School in March for a one-day conference, when Muslim and Christian speakers shared their views with students on the theme of 'what it is to be human'. Though different in culture, Bordesley Green being an urban all girls predominantly Muslim school, both sets of students had enjoyed discussing their common humanity.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation compiled by student from Wigmore the four Wigmore students gave an excerpt from the presentation they intend to give at the SACRE Annual Conference in September.

The students reported that the day conference had taken the form of four workshop sessions based on exploring Christian or Muslim perspectives on 'being human' and feed back sessions. A major learning point had been that what you hear or read in the news may not be the full picture in that the extremist actions in the name of religion by a few should not be seen to be representative of the whole. An outcome of the day had been the wish to have videoconference links with other schools to further their development of understanding and contact with other school/faith communities.

SACRE noted that the students had had time to talk informally and had ascertained that the preconception of the Muslim students had been that the Wigmore students would be atheists and have inferior morals. Rather than having any major religious concerns the Muslim students seemed to have been more surprised by the rural location and the lack of local facilities e.g. a shopping mall.

Questioned further on areas of difference between the two sets of students the Wigmore students had found, apart from some language difficulties, they had actually more areas in common e.g. music and sport.

Kate Mayglothling reported that while the event had taken a lot of organising it was hoped that a similar visit to Bordesley Green Girls School could be arranged. SACRE appreciated the effort Kate Mayglothling had put into both the day conference and the preparation of the presentation and commended this type of exchange of view to other schools.

The Chairman thanked the Wigmore students for their presentation and looked forward to the full presentation at the SACRE Annual Conference on 27th September.

At this point the meeting adjourned for 5 minutes.

On resuming The Consultant for Religious Education reported that arrangements were proceeding well for the Annual Conference to be held at Hedley Lodge Belmont, however, she was a little disappointed that at this stage the take up of places had been slow.

It was commented that as a number of school self-evaluation forms had identified the provision of further professional development in Religious Education to be an issue, it was a concern that schools hadn't, as yet, taken up this opportunity to attend.

RESOLVED That the presentation and the report be noted.

7. OFSTED REPORT: MAKING SENSE OF RELIGION

SACRE considered the findings contained in the OfSTED report “Making Sense of Religion: a report on religious education in schools and the impact of locally agreed syllabi”. A copy of the OfSTED press release had been printed in the agenda and copies of the full report had been sent with the agenda to members.

The OfSTED report found that “some progress had been made in enhancing the provision for religious education in recent years. Pupils’ achievement had improved. Developments nationally have contributed substantially to this improvement, but the overall quality of RE is still not consistently high enough”. A number of recommendations for consideration by the DFES, QCA, and schools were included in the report. Recommendations for local authorities and SACRE’s related to how they need to consider ways in which SACREs could be better supported to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively; use the Framework rigorously in reviewing their agreed syllabus and consider how the work of SACREs might support further promotion of community cohesion and educating for diversity.

The Consultant for Religious Education commented upon the compilation of the report; some of the reasoning behind the recommendations; how the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus already picked up on issues from the non-statutory Framework; the opportunities for SACRE, particularly in the area of contributing to community cohesion, and the need for SACRE to be adequately resourced.

Following discussion on the under achievement of boys and in particular para 29 of the main report concerning getting boys engaged in the subject, it was noted that GCSE courses were to be revised to make the subject more challenging. Discussion then lead to the need for trained and enthusiastic teachers to be adequately resourced and equipped with a relevant breadth of experience to motivate the pupils in the subject.

Reference was made to the earlier agenda item and presentation by Wigmore High School students concerning SACREs opportunity to contribute to community cohesion by means of widening pupils understanding of other faiths to dispel any misconceptions or stereotyping of other cultures.

Rev I Terry circulated at the meeting copies of the Church of England’s response to the OfSTED report. The Church of England concurred with OfSTED’s concern about the variable quality of locally agreed syllabuses; strongly supported a statutory national Framework/Curriculum Order/Syllabus for RE; strongly endorsed the continuing role of SACRE’s in relation to supporting and monitoring RE locally and recognised the continuing areas of weakness and concern highlighted by OfSTED and called on the Government to give serious consideration to implementing both OfSTED’s recommendations and also the related recommendations in the RE Council’s recently published RE National Strategy.

The Chairman reiterated the need for local input to the RE Syllabus and concurred with the view that, given the resources, the work of SACRE could contribute to the community cohesion agenda.

RESOLVED That

- a) the OfSTED report “Making Sense of Religion: a report on religious education in schools and the impact of locally agreed syllabi” be noted; and**

- b) the recommendations contained in the report concerning local authorities and SACREs be considered as part of the ongoing review of the SACRE Development Plan.**

8. INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS

SACRE considered a report on the inspection of Religious Education in Church of England schools in the County.

The Director, Hereford Diocesan Board of Education, was delighted to share with SACRE the results of Statutory Inspection of Anglican School (SIAS) inspections September 2005 – April 2007 copies of which were issued at the meeting.

The report gave the school inspection rating (1 outstanding – 4 inadequate) against the key question “How distinctive and effective is the school as a church school?” and against a number of further questions. He commented that overall the 28 diocesan schools listed generally performed to high standards. A similar report including diocesan schools in the south of Shropshire could also be made available. He further commented that a number of schools had encountered issues concerning the use of the self evaluation form (SEF), however, these had been addressed and schools were now focusing on any identified areas of weakness.

Responding to a comment that a number of schools had received a 3 rating (satisfactory) for question 2 “what is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community” The Director responded that this point had already been noted and there was always room for improvement.

SACRE thanked The Director, Hereford Diocesan Board of Education for supplying the information and appreciated the contribution that church schools made to education in the County.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

9. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP "FINDING TREASURE" - UPDATE

SACRE were informed that the Collective Worship guidance “Finding Treasure” was in the final stages of proof reading and printing and that it was anticipated that the guidance would be launched in the Autumn Term. The Director, Diocesan Board of Education, offered, if thought appropriate, the use of the Great Hall at the Bishops Palace.

10. MULTI-FAITH FESTIVAL - UPDATE

SACRE were updated on the proposed Herefordshire Multi-faith Festival.

The Consultant for Religious Education was pleased to report that the Herefordshire based Multi-faith Development Group had finally been successful in its bid for funding from the Herefordshire Local Network Fund. While the first bid had been rejected a further bid had been submitted and had been successful. Work on the festival by the Group had continued and invitations for schools to take part had been issued. This had resulted in a significant oversubscription. Schools had therefore been chosen to attend on a first come first served basis. The festival would comprise of 8 workshops per day for the 2 days prior to the SACRE Annual Conference. Fortunately this would also enable the workshop facilitators to also attend the SACRE Annual Conference. Teachers from the schools attending were to

attend a pre-event training day so that they could prepare the pupils for the day and organise the questions for the sessions. 160 pupils from 16 primary schools and 38 teachers would attend the event.

She further reported that Mrs J Cecil, Head of Holmer CE Primary School, who were very kindly hosting the festival was investigating the possibility of recording the event as part of a post festival information pack to aid the dissemination of activities and strategies to other schools in the county.

While disappointed that such an event had had to rely on an external group obtaining grant funding to proceed, SACRE were delighted to hear that the event was proceeding. In view of the obvious interest by schools, evidenced by the significant oversubscription, SACRE hoped that the local authority would consider supporting such an event in the future as it supported schools in their RE and multi-cultural development targets and contributed to the Council's community cohesion agenda.

RESLVED That the report be noted.

11. THE "SECONDARY CURRICULUM REVIEW 2007" - UPDATE

SACRE received an update on the national "Secondary Curriculum Review 2007".

The Consultant for Religious Education reported that following the discussion and resultant resolution at the previous meeting in March, a response had been made to the consultation on the national "Secondary Curriculum Review 2007".

She reported that the Key Stage 3 and 4 national curriculum had been revised to give teachers a less prescriptive, flexible framework for teaching with the aim of creating scope to meet the learning needs of each individual student. She commented that further information was available on the QCA web site and she thought that the new curriculum would be introduced from September 2008.

She was aware that advertisements for the posts of national advisor(s) and national leader(s) had recently been placed and hoped that further support and training would be made available.

SACRE hoped that as more information became available at secondary schools on the implementation then further reports would be made to SACRE.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

SACRE noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 2.00pm on Monday 10th December 2007 at Brockington, Hafod Road, Hereford.

The meeting ended at 3.56 p.m.

CHAIRMAN