

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 9 March 2009 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor WU Attfield, Mrs C Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mr. P. Bowen, Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Councillor Brig P Jones CBE, Mrs S McCamley and Mr Z Pandor

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Mrs L Barker, Mrs J Brown, Mrs A Daniel Sr D O'Donnell, Ms K Mayglothling.

33. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Ms C Crump substituted for Mrs J Brown.

34. MINUTES

SACRE requested that the Democratic Services Officer seek an answer to the question concerning pupil entry for examinations posed in the penultimate paragraph of minute 21 and report to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That subject to correcting Daniels to Daniel in the forth paragraph of Minute 25 the minutes of the meeting held 1 December 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

35. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions were received from the public.

36. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Catlow-Hawkins as a co-opted member, Mrs G Jutle as a Sikh member on Committee A and Mr T Leach, Director of Education, Hereford Diocese, representing the Church of England on Committee B.

37. MULTI-FAITH EVENT FOR CHILDREN

SACRE received a report from Mrs J Cecil on Multi-faith events held at Holmer C.E. Primary School and Whitecross High School and considered outline proposals for future events.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs J Cecil, Headteacher at Holmer C.E. Primary School and commented that the first multi-faith event had been held immediately following the 2007 floods.

Mrs Cecil commented that pupils in Herefordshire had little contact with other faiths and schools had a duty to address the issue of community cohesion. Therefore, other than taking pupils on visits e.g. to specific religious sites in Birmingham, a local event involving a range of faiths had seemed the most effective way of addressing this issue. This had also helped in making the teaching real to the pupils.

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She reported that teachers had attended a pre-event training session on how to prepare the pupils for the event. Prior to the event starting pupils had been given time to be calm and receptive to the event and informed about what would happen.

Approximately 800 pupils, accompanied by teachers, had now attended events both at Holmer Primary School and at Whitecross High School. Based on the pupils photo story boards created at the events, she showed a number Photostory presentations made by pupils to illustrate elements of the event workshops.

She reported that to date funding had come mainly from grants from a range of sources and from small contributions from participating schools in the case of the Whitecross transition project. The Herefordshire Multifaith Development Group have submitted a funding bid to the Community Development Foundation Faiths in Action fund and a response was expected in April 09.

While attendance had been good there were quite a number of schools, mainly towards the boundaries of the County, that hadn't attended due to the travelling times involved and this could be addressed by holding events at other schools around the County.

On debating the subject the following principal comments were noted:

- Now that the events were becoming established SACRE considered it was essential that the momentum was maintained and that they should be made accessible throughout the County.
- Based on the events so far the cost of running an event, excluding transport which is payable by schools, was £22 per pupil.
- A suggestion was made that the Sylvia Short Charity could be approached by schools for financial support towards transportation costs.
- While a grant application had been made that, if awarded, would go towards funding events in 2010/11, no funding had so far been identified for 2009/10.
- If the Herefordshire Multi-faith Development Group were able to secure £12,000 this would enable the Group to provide 8 days of Multi-faith events in the academic year 2009/10. This would reach a further 640 pupils and 35 teachers.
- In view of the large increase in housing expected in the County in the coming years the point was made that the opportunity should be taken now to be proactive and teach pupils about the value of diversity and equality in a cohesive community.
- It was suggested that, as representatives of the community, Herefordshire Councillors, together with town and parish councillors, should attend a similar multi-faith event.

SACRE were strongly of the opinion that these events provided value for money and, in view of Herefordshire's outlying proximity to multi faith communities, provided this younger generation with an understanding and appreciation of multi-faith issues contributing to the longer term community cohesion of the County.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **SACRE strongly recommends to the local authority that adequate funding be found to enable further multi-faith events to be held during the 2009/10 academic year.**
- b) **SACRE strongly recommends that the local authority considers facilitating a similar multi-faith event for Herefordshire and town and parish Councillors;**
- c) **The Chairman of SACRE write to the Leader of the Council in support of a) and b) above; and**
- d) **SACRE be kept informed of progress regarding a) and b) above by way**

of regular briefing notes.

38. RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF NEW SACRE MEMBERS

The Consultant for RE reported upon the National Association of SACRE training for new members of SACRE which had taken place earlier this term in the West Midlands and discussed training issues for existing Members.

The Consultant for RE reported that the government funded NASACRE project to recruit and train new SACRE members was well underway. The project sought to develop the capacity of SACREs through the training of new members to Committee A. She reported that in accordance with the suggestion at the December meeting, Mrs G Jutle, being the new Sikh representative, had been offered the opportunity to attend the training.

Mrs G Jutle reported that she had attended the West Midland January training session and had also attended Kingsland Primary School to observe an RE lesson. She commented that, being a teaching assistant at Whitecross High School, attending Kingsland had given her a useful insight to RE teaching in the primary sector.

She passed on an observation concerning the amount of Collective Worship performed in schools. Collective Worship was usually performed as part of the school assembly, however, it seemed to her that a great deal of this time was devoted to non Collective Worship activities and school notices. Some schools didn't have daily assembly.

It was suggested that Collective Worship and the time schools allocate to it should be the subject of a future report.

At this point SACRE undertook a Group discussion on the themes of:

- What is it like to be a SACRE Member? and
- What do Members need to help everyone feel they can contribute fully?

Members had been provided with copies of the handbook for new SACRE Members produced by NASACRE.

The following are the principal comments on the first theme:

- It depended on what was expected of the Member. The role needed to be clearly set out, including any guidance on who the member represented and who they were expected to feed back to.
- Members deemed it a privilege to be on SACRE and to represent their faith.
- SACRE should be responsive to children's needs.
- While meetings were informative there was a degree of frustration that SACRE was an 'advisory' body to the local authority and therefore didn't have access to its own funding to undertake more significant projects.
- SACRE meetings were a good opportunity to network.

The following are the principal comments on the second theme:

- Clarity about who or what the members represent and who they were expected to report back to.
- Information about the extent of the powers of SACRE.
- Clarification on the resources of SACRE.
- Further opportunities to exchange information.
- Training for members and the opportunity to improve networking through social events/activities.

The point was made that children are the future and therefore there was a need to ensure that

the spiritual element, including the ethos to care for other people, was included in their education.

RESOLVED: that the Chairman discuss with the SACRE Lead Officer and the Clerk possible ways to further improve the training and flow of information to Members.

39. SACRE CONFERENCE 2009

The Consultant for RE presented a draft outline plan (circulated prior to the meeting) for the 2009 SACRE Annual Conference, provisionally booked for 24th September 2009.

The Consultant for RE reported that following initial debate at the last meeting, further thought had been given to the suggested theme of 'What is good RE?'. She commented that the conference programme, as circulated, had been compiled to provide teachers and heads with an opportunity to reflect on the important place and contribution Religious Education can make in a changing school curriculum. While largely based on teaching in the primary sector, elements had been included for the secondary sector, and she briefly outlined some of the intended objectives for the key note address and workshops.

SACRE noted that attendance numbers now averaged around 50 delegates and it was suggested that, in view of the broad theme to the 2009 conference, governors and non RE teachers should be encouraged to attend.

As hosts for the Conference SACRE members would continue to have free admission, however, the Conference had to be self financing and therefore a suggestion that a discount be offered should a school book a second place would need to be investigated further.

The Consultant for RE commented that the workshops had been planned so that they could accommodate the now average attendance. If there were a significant increase in numbers, particularly from the secondary sector, Mrs Catlow-Hawkins kindly offered to run an extra workshop.

Questioned on whether the Conference programme should include elements of Collective Worship (CW), the Consultant for RE commented that CW is a separate theme to RE and therefore its inclusion may distract from the main theme.

Mrs Catlow-Hawkins offered to highlight the 'role of Collective Worship in Schools' with colleagues on the Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads (HASH).

RESOLVED: That the draft Conference programme be approved and in view of the broad theme to the 2009 conference, governors and non RE teachers should be encouraged to attend.

40. QCA ADVICE - AGREED SYLLABUS REVISIONS

SACRE considered the QCA advice on the timing of agreed syllabus revisions in 2009-2010 and considered issuing advice to the local authority on the timing of any revision to the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus 2006-2011.

The Consultant for RE reported that QCA had issued non-statutory advice to local authorities and SACREs on the timing of reviews of Agreed Syllabus given the introduction of the new secondary curriculum, the Primary Curriculum Review and the revision of circ 1/94 later this year. The advice had been timely as SACRE needed to consider when to request the local authority to form the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus Conference to undertake any revisions

considered necessary to the existing Syllabus.

She reported that in accordance with the requirement to review the Syllabus every five years, the Agreed Syllabus Conference would need to have concluded its review by Spring 2011 so that the authority had time to print the new Syllabus and schools had time to plan for its implementation by September 2011. Based on previous reviews she recommended that the review should commence in December 2009.

SACRE noted that the review would need to take account of national developments, particularly around the new primary and secondary curriculum and consultation would be undertaken widely within the education community to reflect local needs.

The Democratic Services Officer informed Members of the requirements contained in Circular 1/94 concerning the formation and constitution for the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus Conference. The membership of previous Syllabus Conferences had been similar to that of SACRE and he suggested that this should continue.

The Chairman suggested that as some preliminary work was needed to inform the review he and the Lead Officer for SACRE and the Consultant for RE should meet to devise an outline programme for the Syllabus review.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and

- a) **it be Recommended that the Local Authority initiate a review of the Herefordshire Religious Education Agreed Syllabus by establishing the Herefordshire Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Conference, the first meeting of which should be during December 2009; and**
- b) **The Chairman, SACRE Lead Officer and the Consultant for RE undertake preliminary work to inform the syllabus review.**

41. FUTURE MEETING DATES

SACRE noted the future meeting dates.

42. BAHA'IS LEADERS HELD IN IRAN

Mrs C Ault informed SACRE about Amnesty International's urgent call for the immediate and unconditional release of Bahai leaders in Iran whom Amnesty International consider to be held as prisoners of conscious because of their beliefs or peaceful activities on behalf of the Bahai community. Amnesty International were recommending that urgent appeals be sent to the Head of the Judiciary in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Relevant details were issued to Members.

The meeting ended at 4.15 pm

CHAIRMAN