

Minutes of the meeting of Standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE) held at Committee Room 1, Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford HR1 2HX on Friday 9 November 2018 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Members: Lou Barker, Mr P Burbidge, Mr Debenham, Kate Mayglothing and MT McEvelly

In attendance: Councillor EJ Swinglehurst, Cabinet Member Children and Families

Officers: Alison Naylor and Stephen Pett

9. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairperson opened the meeting and welcomed new members of SACRE: Mr Pat Burbidge, (Roman Catholic representative); and Mr Stewart Debenham (Church of England representative).

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Swinglehurst, The Cabinet Member Children and Families to the meeting.

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs Ault, Mr Caldicott, Ani-la Choesang, Councillor Harvey, Mr Nicholas and Canon Nugent.

11. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

Mrs Kate Mayglothing acted as a substitute for Mr Ben Caldicott.

12. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2018 are agreed as a correct record.

13. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

No questions received.

14. PLANS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 2019 AND PRIMARY RE SURVEY

SACRE received a report concerning feedback from the 2018 primary and secondary RE conferences. The report contained details of the feedback together with a list of attendees at the conferences since 2011. It also provided the draft primary RE survey for SACRE to consider and proposed arrangements for professional development in 2018-2019.

Stephen Pett, RE Today, introduced the report and advised SACRE that RE Today had won the tender for the provision of RE support to the Council over the next two years in Herefordshire. As part of its contract with the Council there would be the provision of webinars to support staff training in schools; it was yet to be determined whether the webinars would be broadcast live to enable interaction with participants or record a webinar for circulation with schools and interested parties. Mr Pett also introduced the Primary RE Survey which had been considered previously and suggested that a further question to schools could be to ask what they would consider the best way to receive training in future.

SACRE considered the feedback from the 2018 conferences and professional development and raised the following points:

- The feedback concerning the half day conferences was mixed and it was explained that schools located at a distance from the selected venue for the conference would prefer a full day programme. SACRE was broadly in agreement that a full day conference was preferable;
- The feedback on the content of the conferences had been positive however there was concern that there had been an attempt to undertake too much content in the half day provided;
- The content of the forthcoming primary conference in 2019 was considered. SACRE suggested the following topics: the use of the internet/social media; mental health; tolerance; and common ground between religions and beliefs;
- In terms of the content of the conferences it was explained that in-depth examination of subject matter e.g. Islam or Buddhism would be useful particularly to those teachers who were not specialists in the subject.
- The trend of decreasing numbers of schools in attendance at conferences since 2011 was considered and it was queried whether a question should be put to primary schools as part of the RE survey to understand why they did not come to the conferences.
- SACRE considered the provision of webinars at forthcoming conferences and agreed that in 2019 a live webinar should be attempted and one should be recorded and circulated to schools as a resource. It was suggested that the webinar could be promoted in Spotlight with a link provided to the resource to schools.
- The arrangements for the secondary conferences were also discussed and it was confirmed that an arrangement with the three counties would be undertaken in 2019. SACRE was supportive of the arrangements for the secondary conferences which it was felt should not change following the receipt of positive feedback from the 2018 conferences.
- It was explained that teacher members of Worcestershire SACRE had worked with University of Worcester to secure funding from Culham St Gabriel's Trust to host a pupil and teacher day on 21 June 2019. The outcomes of the day would be assessed to determine if it was a success and whether such a format should be explored for the secondary conferences in future. For 2019, it was decided that the Worcester model should not replace the teacher conference.
- SACRE considered details of the 2018 conference on RE in special schools which had taken place across the three counties and noted the positive feedback received.

RESOLVED: that SACRE notes the report and asks RE Today to consider those comments raised in the finalisation of the programmes for the 2019 conferences and the RE Primary survey.

SACRE considered its annual report and expressed thanks to RE Today for its production. It was agreed that it was important for SACRE to list and emphasise those achievements it had accomplished during the year.

It was confirmed that the RE results from 2018 would be included in the report once they were available.

RESOLVED: that SACRE approves the 2017/18 and delegates authority to the clerk to finalise the document prior to its publication and circulation.

16. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXAMINATION RESULTS 2018

SACRE received and noted an update on the RE results from 2018. It was confirmed that the results had not yet been compiled but it was likely that this would occur shortly. Once the results had been produced they would be distributed to members of SACRE and included in the annual report. It was requested that an agenda item on the examination results was added to the next meeting of SACRE in March 2019.

17. COMMISSION ON RE REPORT

SACRE received a report concerning the outcomes of the Commission on RE report published in September 2018 and the recommendations contained in the report. Mr Pett introduced the report and explained that there had been a mixed reaction to the contents of the report. The recommendation to increase bursaries for RE teachers was supported but feedback from NASCRE had expressed disappointment at the lack of mention in the report of the excellent examples of RE provision in place across the country. The report contained recommendations which were substantial and which would potentially have a significant impact upon SACRE and locally agreed syllabuses.

SACRE raised those points below in the discussion which followed:

- It was felt that the inclusion of an RE Ebacc should have been proposed as a recommendation in the report;
- The use of the term 'worldviews' was felt to be vague and insubstantial. It was noted that it was difficult to increase the appeal of a subject without diluting its core content.
- It was hoped that the new framework that was being adopted by Ofsted to look at subjects holistically would enhance the profile of RE in schools.

RESOLVED: That SACRE notes the outcomes, recommendations and implications of the Commission on RE report.

18. PLANNING FOR REVISION OF THE 2015 - 2020 AGREED SYLLABUS

SACRE received a verbal update from Mr Pett regarding planning for the agreed syllabus conference. It was proposed that on the day of the next meeting of SACRE there would also be an Agreed Syllabus Conference to begin the review of the agreed syllabus. There is a statutory duty for the agreed syllabus to be considered and reviewed every five years. SACRE could ask for updates and inclusions in the existing syllabus or decide to produce an entirely new syllabus. The existing syllabus was adopted in 2015, licensed from RE Today, and the license runs out in 2020; RE Today are looking at methods of updating the current syllabus with the inclusion of supplements rather than drafting from new. Mr Pett will present a range of options for SACRE to consider at the Agreed Syllabus Conference in March 2019.

SACRE raised those comments below in the discussion which followed:

- The link to Understanding Christianity was queried and the level of resource to support the existing syllabus was raised. It was explained that this could be incorporated into the syllabus and other elements removed if that was the decision resulting from the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

RESOLVED: that SACRE agrees the re-establishment of the Agreed Syllabus Conference at the next meeting in March.

19. UPDATE ON ANY NEW INITIATIVES IN RE

SACRE received the report of new initiatives in RE which was introduced by Mr Pett. He explained that the report contained details of: increases in funding for bursaries for RE teachers; a recent question asked in Parliament concerning the primary teaching of RE; an update on forthcoming conferences and projects from NATRE; and proposals for the establishment of a network of RE ambassadors across the country. SACRE questioned how the ambassadors would be appointed and Mr Pett undertook to provide more information on recruitment.

The recruitment of RE staff to schools was queried and the Head of Learning and Achievement confirmed that there was not a problem with recruiting RE staff in Herefordshire. It was commented that an interesting question on a prospective RE survey of secondary schools should ask if the RE teachers were non-specialist in the subject.

RESOLVED: that SACRE notes the update on new initiatives in RE.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The committee noted a change to the next meeting date. The previously published date of 15 March 2019 had now been changed to 1 March 2019 to ensure that SACRE met before purdah ahead of the local elections in May 2019.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm

Chairman