

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 28th June, 2004 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor J. Stone (Chairman)

Mr. G.W. Ault, Mrs. J. Brown, Father M Donnelly, Dr. D. Goodman, Ms. K. Mayglothling, Mrs S McCamley, Mrs A. Mundy, Mr. Z. Pandor, Mr. J. Rendall and Mr M. Rollnick

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs W.U. Attfield, Mrs. C. Ault, Rev. P. Barlow, Councillor P. E. Harling, and Rev I. Terry.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Mr. G. W. Ault substituted for Mrs C. Ault.

3. MINUTES

The Committee Administrator (Scrutiny) recommended the following amendments to the minutes:

That the penultimate paragraph in item 40 – A Survey of Religious Education in some Primary Schools – be substituted by the following:

“In relation to training for RE co-ordinators the Consultant for RE reported that a package of training was currently available. The Assessment Working Party had been put on hold pending the outcome of the National Framework for RE.”

That the word ‘test’ be deleted from the second line of the third paragraph in item 41 - Update on Survey of Religious Education in Secondary Schools

The Consultant for Education briefly commented that, in relation to the second paragraph on page 3 relating to the collation of contact details of various religious groups, work was underway to collect the details.

RESOLVED: That subject to the substitution of the above amendments the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2004 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

No written questions had been received.

5. HMI CONFERENCE REPORT

SACRE received a presentation by Mrs A. Daniels on the HMI Conference concerning RE Co-ordinators in Primary Schools.

Mrs Daniels reported that the key speakers at the conference had been Barbara Wintersgill, Geoff Teece and Liz Townsend. The conference had also involved workshops and plenary sessions.

Mrs Daniels highlighted the following main points raised by the speakers:

- **Barbara Wintersgill** (HMI) reported to the group that whilst considerable improvement in primary RE had been made, there were still aspects requiring further improvement. Weaknesses lay in support for pupils with Special Educational Need (SEN); gifted/talented pupils and in assessment.
- **Is RE different?** – Barbara Wintersgill further reported that in some cases RE was seen by pupils and teachers as a less work intensive subject; teachers may be less confident to support or explore the subject when it wasn't their main teaching subject; the subject may still be suffering from a 'Sunday School' image; and the subject may be perceived as a soft option for exams.
- **What can be done to improve RE?** – teachers needed to be confident in the subject to ensure that they planned meaningful lessons in accordance with a clear Agreed Syllabus, that was in line with the curriculum. Assessment was not primarily to do with tests. 'Level descriptors' should be used in accordance with the syllabus. The level of resources could be improved, including the variety available e.g. artefacts; the better use of appropriate materials and the use of pupils, parents or teachers with a knowledge in a specific faith.
- **Inspiring colleagues to teach well** – adequate time, training and professional resources should be given to teachers to ensure that they understand what RE is and how it links to national strategies.
- RE should be about understanding oneself and other people; be interesting, exciting, useful and relevant to today's issues and be thought provoking.

SACRE acknowledged that a great deal of good RE teaching was being done in schools. They debated a number of areas where further improvements could be made including the possible employment by the LEA of a specific advisor for RE who could go out to schools to advise and encourage the development of the subject. The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance Service commented that unfortunately the LEA worked within financial constraints and had to assess the level of resource provision across the whole curriculum. The Committee noted the comment and wondered whether this reflected the status of RE when compared to other subjects e.g. Maths or English.

SACRE agreed that there were other methods of supporting the teaching of RE namely: the ability for schools to 'buy in' the services of the RE Consultant; the provision of guidance by SACRE; the opportunity to hear key speakers and to 'network' at the SACRE Annual Conference and through the support of SACRE outlined in the SACRE Development Plan.

In relation to the Annual Conference it was suggested that a short session be organised specifically aimed at headteachers, to highlight the many points raised earlier in the item concerning the problems of teaching RE.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Daniels for her informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation on the HMI Conference concerning RE Co-ordinators in Primary Schools be noted.

6. NON STATUTORY NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

To consider SACRE's response to the draft document "A National Framework for Religious Education" issued for consultation by QCA"

The Chairman reported that he and the RE Consultant had attended the consultation meeting held in Birmingham on 26th May 2004.

Members of SACRE had received a copy of the draft Framework document with the agenda. Following the consultation meeting the RE Consultant, in consultation with the Chairman, had circulated a draft response to the document for consideration by SACRE.

The RE Consultant reported that the consultation meeting had mostly been spent in discussion groups going through key aspects of the framework and responding to questions and the consultation document. She highlighted a number of issues raised during the consultation meeting, which had been reflected in the draft response. She concluded that the consultation process seemed to be genuine and a number of positive developments were emerging. The Framework had been described as the 'most significant development for RE since the 1944 Education Act'. The final Framework would influence SACREs as, in light of it, they may be required to review their Agreed Syllabus. The 'levels' in the Framework seemed to be a problem and while more work had already gone on, there would no doubt be further change in this area.

Having studied the draft response SACRE considered that the draft should be amended to reflect the following points:

- Emphasis should be included concerning the further exemplification of good practice and the good range of RE activities appropriate to Foundation Stage.
- That wherever possible plain English must be used so that the Framework was clear and understandable to non-specialists.
- If necessary the Framework should include a Glossary of terms used.
- That the phraseology used in parts of the response be revised.

SACRE noted the article 'Graham Langtree's Speech to the NASACRE AGM, April 20th 2004' contained in SACRE News Summer 2004, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members, which further detailed the position regarding the Framework.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and subject to the above amendments the suggested response be submitted to QCA.

7. KEY STAGE 3 STRATEGY

SACRE received a report on how Religious Education fitted into the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

The RE Consultant reported that thanks to various funding streams (Beacon School, KS3 school improvement and SACRE funding) a great deal of good work was going on by the Key Stage 3 group to collate and develop areas of good practice.

Kate Mayglothing reported that a number of meetings of the KS3 group had taken place, mostly in the evenings, and the Group were working on developing materials using 'thinking skills' and revising the Year 7 unit of work. Some of the work produced so far was being trialed in a number of schools. The work was ongoing and a further report would be made in due course.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8. DRAFT GUIDANCE ON COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS

SACRE received a report on the drafting of Guidance on Collective Worship in Schools.

Jonathan Rendall reported that further drafting work had been undertaken to produce the guidance and he circulated copies of a working draft of 'Finding Treasure – a guide for inspirational worship in Herefordshire schools'. He commented that the drafting work had been well supported by teaching staff on the Collective Guidance Working Group. The guidance, which still required a number of further chapters, aimed to set out ideas for Collective Worship through engaging thought, response and reflection, rather than being a prescriptive 'recipe book'. He acknowledged that thought would also need to be given to the final design of the publication.

SACRE noted that so far the guidance had been planned around the primary sector. However, a secondary sector version was intended in due course. The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance voiced concern over the long-term future of Collective Worship and commented that this guidance work re-affirmed its importance.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

9. TEACHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

SACRE received a report by Dr M. Goodman, on proposals by the Marches Consortium relating to teacher training opportunities for Religious Education teachers in the County.

Dr Goodman reported that now that initial teacher training courses with the Marches Consortium were well established the consortium were arranging, through the University of Gloucestershire, to offer a post-graduate RE qualification course. The course was specially designed for primary school RE Co-ordinators; secondary heads of RE departments and teachers of RE as a second subject. It was planned that the course would run from September 2004, offering a 1-year part-time Post Graduate Certificate in professional development specialising in Religious Education. He reported that a significant subsidy would be available and that a bursary may also be available.

SACRE noted that while it would be a demanding course, subject to a limit on numbers, it would be open to all schools. SACRE were delighted that the Consortium were further developing RE training opportunities and it was suggested that Dr Goodman should inform delegates about the course at the SACRE Annual Conference in September.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

10. SACRE MONITORING OF OFSTED INSPECTIONS 2003-2004

SACRE considered the findings of Ofsted inspections in relation to Religious Education, Collective Worship, and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development.

The report by the RE Consultant was based on Ofsted inspections at 8 schools. This included: two special needs schools; three secondary schools, including one Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided (V.A.) school and two Community High schools; and three primary schools, one Community school and one Voluntary Controlled (VC) school.

She reported that with regard to primary schools the small sample and inadequate reporting made it impossible to draw any representative conclusions. The main issue that had arisen had been the quality of inspection in 2 of the 3 schools (Gorsley Goffs Endowed and Colwall CE). This issue had been reported in greater detail to SACRE in March 2004 and had resulted in the Chairman taking the matter up with Ofsted. The Chairman read out the response from Ofsted, which agreed 'that there were shortcomings in the reports on the inspection of religious education.' It stated that 'complaints about Ofsted inspections will not normally be considered if received more than three months after the date on which the final inspection report is produced'. As part of their quality assurance process they 'regularly monitor the work of inspectors during an inspection and assessments are made on the quality of the reports'. The RE Consultant confirmed that information bulletins were regularly issued to inspectors by the contractors undertaking Ofsted inspections and that these had recently reminded inspectors about the requirements to report fully on RE. The recent reminders had arisen out of complaints from SACRE's to Ofsted.

The RE Consultant further reported that in the two community secondary schools inspected RE was very good, largely due to the very good leadership of subject specialists. There had also been improvements in Special Schools.

The report summarised the following aspects requiring further support:

- In RE the RE Consultant highlighted that an Ofsted report had commented that the use of non-specialist staff slowed the pace of progress for Key Stage 3 pupils in one school.
- In Collective Worship, issues of compliance at secondary level had arisen possibly due to the changes in the inspection framework. If governors had done all they could to meet the requirements an unsatisfactory judgement could have been avoided.
- In Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development the development of pupils was reported to be good overall with a generally improving picture in terms of spiritual development since previous inspections in most schools. However, there was one exception at secondary level where a lack of opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum was reported.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

11. REPORT ON NASACRE AGM

SACRE received a report on the NASACRE AGM held on 20th April, 2004.

The RE Consultant briefly reported upon the NASACRE AGM, more fully reported in SACRE News – Summer 2004, copies of which had been distributed to Members prior to the meeting. She highlighted that the Keynote speaker had been Attaullah Siddiqi of the Islamic Foundation UK. She also reported that due to costs the production of SACRE News was under review.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 4.28 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

