

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

22 November 2021 – At a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held at 10.30 am as a virtual meeting with restricted public access.

Present:

Committee A

Mrs Bell – Jewish
Mr Edmondson – Humanists UK
Mrs Flood – Roman Catholic
Rev Higgin-Botham – United Reformed Church
Ms Hock – Quaker
Mrs Jones – Baha'i
Rev Pitkeathly – Free Churches
Mr Sheldon – Baptist Union
Major Warner – Salvation Army

Committee B

Mrs Black – Church of England
Rev Higgins – Church of England
Mr Simpson – Church of England
Mrs Smith (Vice-Chairman) – Church of England

Committee C

Miss Barker – Teacher Representative
Mr Bird – Teacher Representative (Primary)
Ms Elphick – Teacher Representative (Special)
Rev Millwood – Teacher Representative (Secondary)

Committee D

Cllr Ali – Local Education Authority
Cllr Burgess – Local Education Authority
Cllr Burrett (Chairman) – Local Education Authority
Cllr Jupp – Local Education Authority
Cllr Lord – Local Education Authority
Cllr Quinn – Local Education Authority

Apologies for Absence: Mrs Ghundale (Sikh) (Committee A);
Cllr Pendleton (Local Education Authority) (Committee D).

Absent: Rev Carn (Methodist) (Committee A), Mr Cornford (Teachers' Union) (Committee C) and Cllr Nagel (Local Education Authority) (Committee D).

10. Chairman's Welcome and Introductions

10.1 The Chairman welcomed all members of SACRE and the return of Ms Hock as a member of SACRE representing the Quakers on Committee A and Mr Bird representing primary schools on Committee C. He also welcomed new members Mr Edmondson representing the Humanists UK on Committee A and Ms Elphick representing special schools on Committee C.

11. Membership Updates

11.1 The meeting noted the changes to the membership listed on the agenda. The Chairman reported that Ms Joanna Tulloch from the University of Chichester had approached the Council seeking to become a co-opted member. The Chairman reported that Ms Tulloch had been unable to join the meeting but shared some of the details she had given about her experience and it was hoped to welcome her to the next meeting on 28 February 2022. It was hoped that the February meeting would be in person and there could be some time for networking and engagement.

12. Members' Interests

12.1 Mrs Smith (Committee B) declared that the data in Agenda Item No 7 included information from the school where she is employed.

13. Minutes of the last meeting

13.1 The meeting discussed whether under minute 6.3 "well attended" was appropriate considering 25% of primary schools attended and 21% of secondary schools. The meeting was reminded that there needed to be a realistic view bearing in mind the challenges that schools had been under with the Covid-19 pandemic.

13.2 Resolved – The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2021 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

14. Agreed Syllabus

14.1 Mrs Hammond updated the meeting on the progress of arrangements for future network meetings. Three virtual sessions were aimed at primary schools but interested secondary school representatives would be welcomed. These would be held on the following dates:

- 7 December 2021, focussing on what does good RE look like and linking developments in the Agreed Syllabus. Encouraging collaboration and support between schools on good practice.
- 8 March 2022, focussing on the strategy to support delivery of good RE.
- 14 June 2022, focussing on how we assess good RE.

14.2 It was agreed it would be good to get SACRE members involved in the network sessions to observe and be involved in discussion.

14.3 Consideration was given as to how attendance numbers could be improved. It was agreed that a request be made for the sessions to be readvertised via the Headteachers' Letters email. Mrs Hammond agreed to pick this action up with the Local Authority.

15. SACRE Annual Report

15.1 Mrs Hammond reported she had attended two training sessions delivered by NASACRE: the first on writing SACRE Annual Reports and the second one on worldviews. Recordings of both sessions were available for sharing with members who were interested.

15.2 The Annual Report, which is a statutory requirement, would be a good opportunity for the members to work together to review how SACRE was working under many different headings which were part of a framework.

15.3 Mrs Hammond proposed that the work be undertaken towards the end of the academic year. Rev Pitkeathly agreed to share the report produced by the Cumbrian SACRE and Mrs Hammond reported that Annual Reports were often available on the SACRE websites. It was felt it would be good to have a benchmark for the West Sussex SACRE against other peer local authorities.

16. School Workforce Data for 2020

16.1 The meeting considered some School Workforce Data for 2020 produced by the National Association of Teachers of RE from census returns in November 2020 of secondary schools in West Sussex. Whilst the data showed a promising outlook some concerns were raised including the differences between religious and community schools, why not all schools had responded and how did these figures compare nationally or with peer group authorities?

16.2 Mrs Hammond reported she had shared the data with the Local Authority's School Improvement Advisers so that they could ask questions when they visited schools. Mr Wagstaff told the meeting that schools can organise their timetables how they wished and could group RE in with other Humanities subjects.

16.3 Rev Millwood offered to run a survey amongst secondary headteachers to gain further information if the meeting considered it would be helpful.

16.4 Resolved – That this item be considered further at the next meeting.

17. Ofsted Research Review Series paper on RE

17.1 Mrs Hammond had shared with the meeting a link to the Ofsted Research Review Series paper on RE and the meeting discussed its

contents. It was noted that the Review frequently referenced the complex nature of religious and non-religious worldviews and used inclusive terms to describe them. A major focus was building on pupils' knowledge and understanding rather than focussing on blocks of subjects.

18. Department for Education research into the resourcing of SACREs

18.1 Mrs Hammond introduced research by the Department for Education on resourcing of SACREs. She reported that the advice was for local authorities to allow 2% of CSSB funds to support SACREs to carry out their statutory duties. The basic expectation was a professional officer with expertise in the RE curriculum, a clerk for meeting support eg agendas and minutes, a publicly accessible place to meet, reasonable expenses for members, to publish an Agreed Syllabus, subscription to NASACRE and attendance at the SACRE AGM. On that basis it was felt that this SACRE was well supported.

18.2 Mr Wagstaff was asked if financial support could be given for an annual Youth Voice conference. He responded that perhaps the West Sussex Youth Cabinet could be involved in providing some feedback.

18.3 Mr Wagstaff also clarified that the training and networking meetings were built into a commercial package that schools chose to buy into.

19. Update from Director of Education and Skills

19.1 Mr Wagstaff reported that the briefing from the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills to SACRE and County Council Members on how to utilise conversations on RE with their local schools was in the final stages of preparation and would include key questions. It was hoped to circulate the briefing soon.

19.2 Mr Wagstaff reported that guidance had recently been sent to schools reminding them of their statutory duty to support requests for a private space for prayer and worship in schools. Most schools were supportive but occasionally the Local Authority was called upon to mediate.

19.3 Mr Wagstaff suggested the SACRE may wish to explore how to gain an overview of what is happening in schools and a mechanism to gather that information.

20. Dates of Future Meetings

20.1 SACRE noted that its next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday 28 February 2022. It was asked if meetings could not be set for the first day back after a school holiday and it was agreed to investigate whether this meeting could be moved.

20.2 The Chairman asked the meeting what their thoughts were on moving back to face to face meetings. It was agreed, in principle, to move back to in person meetings in County Hall, Chichester, with the option of hybrid facilities being available for those unable to attend.

The meeting ended at 12.24 pm

Chairman