

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

20 June 2022 – At a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester and via Microsoft Teams. Virtual participants are indicated with an asterisk below.

Committee A

Mrs Bell – Jewish
Mr Edmondson – Humanists UK
Mrs Flood – Roman Catholic*
Mrs Jones – Baha'i
Mr Sheldon – Baptist Union
Mr Syed – Muslim
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

Ms Barker – Teacher Representative*
Mr Bird – Teacher Representative (Primary)
Mr Cornford – NASUWT, the Teacher's Union
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 Lord – Local Education Authority*
Cllr Pendleton – Local Education Authority
Cllr Quinn – Local Education Authority

Co-optees

Ms Tulloch*

Apologies for Absence:

Rev Higgin-Botham (United Reformed Church), Ms Hock (Quaker) and Rev Pitkeathly (Free Churches) (Committee A); Cllr Jupp (Local Education Authority) and Cllr Nagel (Local Education Authority) (Committee D)

Absent:

Rev Carn (Methodist) and Mrs Ghundale (Sikh) (Committee A)

Observing on behalf of the Hindu community:

Mr Soni

1. Chairman's Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The Chairman welcomed all members of SACRE to the hybrid meeting being held in the Council Chamber and on-line. He also welcomed Mr Soni, from the Hindu community, who was joining on-line to observe the meeting with a consideration to joining the membership.

2. Membership Updates

2.1 The Chairman welcomed Mr Syed who had agreed to return as the Muslim representative on Committee A.

3. Members' Interests

3.1 No interests were declared.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

4.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Ms Barker updated under point 22.3 that there were other union representatives interested in joining SACRE but due to cover difficulties in schools they were unable to attend. Unions were putting forward cases for additional facilities time and it was hoped there might be a solution by the next meeting.

4.3 Mrs Hammond reported that the action under point 25.5 was still outstanding but it was still intended for her to meet with Ms Tulloch.

4.4 Under point 27.2 Mrs Hammond reported that work on engaging the Youth Cabinet could begin now that the elections were over.

4.5 Under point 28.1, Mr Syed asked whether there was data on how many people from world religions were teaching religious education in schools. It was confirmed that information was not available but Mrs Hammond agreed to include a request for information in the questionnaire being circulated to schools to see if that information could be gathered.

4.6 Under point 29.1 Mrs Smith reported that responding to Mr Hemming had been delayed but was now progressing.

5. Still Standing Report

5.1 Mrs Hammond introduced the item highlighting that it was an interesting report with lots of comments and recommendations.

5.2 SACRE members felt many aspects and recommendations of the report had been picked up in previous discussions, eg funding, teaching approach, title, academies, etc, but it was felt that the document could be pertinent for the self-evaluation work taking place and could help contribute to the next version of the Agreed Syllabus.

5.3 It was agreed that SACRE membership needed to be representative of the religious make-up of the county and it could also be worth considering academy representation. Academy trusts can use their own plan for the teaching of religious education but if they could be encouraged to use the Agreed Syllabus that would be a good outcome.

5.4 Resolved – that SACRE welcomed the report and would consider its contents within the self-evaluation work for the Annual Report, Development Plan and future Agreed Syllabus.

6. Agreed Syllabus Update

6.1 Mrs Hammond reported that a primary training session on “How do we assess good quality RE” had taken place on 14 June 2022 led by herself, Mrs Black and Freya Breathnach. The meeting had been attended by 19 teachers although more had booked on but had needed to give apologies closer to the time, but all asked for information from the training. Evaluation comments were being compiled but it was felt it had been a successful session.

6.2 Mrs Hammond thanked Mrs Black and Freya Breathnach for their commitment to the three training sessions which had all been successful.

6.3 Discussion at the training session raised that information on SACRE and what facilities could be provided to schools would be welcomed. No training was planned for the next academic year but the idea previously raised of running three locality based SACRE fairs, where teachers could interact with faith leaders and members of SACRE, was welcomed.

6.4 Discussion was also given to running a Youth Voice conference for young people. This had run for four years prior to the pandemic, being held in the summer term. The last event had attendees from 14 secondary schools. It was acknowledged that it took about a year of preparation to run the Youth Voice conference. It was agreed that to start working on a conference was not feasible with the pressures on SACRE of the Annual Report and the Development Plan. Mrs Smith suggested she pull together a costing proposal with Mrs Hammond to share with SACRE members. Several SACRE members offered free facilities for the Youth Voice conference and the fairs.

7. The 2022 RE Report Card

7.1 The Chairman introduced the report which he felt was very mixed and contradicted some of the information in the Still Standing report.

7.2 Rev Millwood reported that she was having trouble filling two vacancies at her school with RE specialist teachers and was having to consider looking at non-specialist teachers. Discussion highlighted that recruitment of teachers had been very difficult this year and specialist RE teachers were the hardest to recruit. To become a specialist teacher in RE candidates needed to have a degree in RE or Humanities. Many universities did not run these courses due to low demand.

7.3 The meeting discussed where the problem with training laid. It was felt that RE was not considered a key subject in the curriculum from as early as Key Stage 3 and its importance was diminished by other curriculum pressures. Additionally young people could not see such a clear future career path from RE and Humanities studies. Mr Wagstaff suggested that perhaps SACRE could engage with the bodies who provided additional support and training to new teachers to enhance RE training.

7.4 It was recognised there could not be a quick resolution to the recruitment problem.

8. SACRE Annual Report

8.1 Mrs Hammond reported that two Zoom meetings had taken place on 11 and 15 May for the sub-group work but had not been well attended. She reminded SACRE members that they needed to be proactive and involved to help develop a SACRE vision, to show what SACRE stands for and to prepare for the future. Mrs Hammond agreed to resend her email on the sub-groups round again.

8.2 Mrs Hammond could not confirm the timeline for the Annual Report but hoped it would be after the October 2022 half term so that the summer exam results could be digested. Other information needed would be information on how performance is in schools, not just exam results but delivery and support, what is happening in schools with collective worship, and SIAMS reports for faith schools. It was considered whether all SACRE members could research a few school websites each to collate information rather than troubling schools for the information.

8.3 Mrs Hammond also suggested that to raise the profile of SACRE thought could be given to producing a SACRE newsletter to send to schools and perhaps a SACRE website.

9. White Paper on Education

9.1 Mrs Hammond introduced the item by informing SACRE that the White Paper published on 28 March had four key recommendations but the element that had most impact for SACRE was that by 2030 all children would benefit from being taught in families of schools or academy trusts. However, it was thought that the teaching of religious education would remain unchanged and would continue as existing.

9.2 Academies are required to deliver religious education but do not have to follow the Agreed Syllabus, however Mrs Hammond reported that she was aware that some academy schools were following the West

Sussex Agreed Syllabus. It was agreed that SACRE needed to be proactive with schools to encourage the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus.

9.3 Mr Wagstaff told SACRE that how it engages with maintained schools, academies and MATS going forward could raise the profile of the West Sussex Agreed Syllabus. The Development Plan needs to build in ways to ensure that all schools can see that SACRE is adding value.

10. Update from Assistant Director of Education and Skills

10.1 Mr Wagstaff reported he was pleased to hear the update on the primary training event and the positive feedback. The Teaching School Hub is a key network for professional development of teachers.

10.2 Mr Wagstaff acknowledged the challenge of recruiting staff and informed SACRE that recruitment was covered in the Education and Skills Strategy which was currently being worked on with stakeholders. It was hoped that when the Strategy was launched in early 2023 it would help work with key partnerships. This could be an ideal opportunity for seeing the work of SACRE as part of a partnership going forward for the next three years.

11. NASACRE Conference

11.1 Rev Pitkeathly had attended the NASACRE Conference but was unable to be at the meeting to give an update. He had however shared a summary from NASACRE which Mrs Hammond agreed to circulate. Any items for discussion could be picked up at the next meeting.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Mr Edmondson asked Mrs Hammond about a letter he had prepared for schools on humanism and asked if it could be circulated to schools. Mrs Hammond suggested that it would be better to incorporate the information into the document being prepared on all SACRE faiths and this was agreed.

13. Dates of Future Meetings

13.1 SACRE noted that the next meeting would be held on 21 November 2022 at County Hall, Chichester, with the hybrid option for joining being available for those who required it.

The meeting ended at 12.35 pm.

Chairman