

## **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

29 June 2023 – At a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held at 10.30 am in Committee Room 3, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Virtual participants are indicated with an asterisk below.

### **Committee A:**

Mrs Bell – Jewish

\*Mrs Ghundale - Sikh

Mrs Hock – Quaker

Mr Soni – Hindu

Major Warner – Salvation Army

### **Committee B:**

Mrs Smith (Vice-Chairman) – Church of England

### **Committee C:**

Ms Barker – Teacher Representative (National Education Union)

Ms Elphick – Teacher Representative (Special)

Revd Millwood – Teacher Representative (Secondary)

### **Committee D:**

Cllr Burrett (Chairman) - Local Education Authority

Cllr Dabell – Local Education Authority

\*Cllr Lord - Local Education Authority

\*Cllr Nagel - Local Education Authority

Cllr Pendleton - Local Education Authority

### **Co-Optee:**

\*Mrs Beer

Apologies for Absence: From Committee A - Mrs Flood (Roman Catholic), Revd Higgin-Botham (United Reformed Church) and Mrs Jones (Baha'i). From Committee B (Church of England) - Mrs Black, Father Scott and Mr Simpson. From Committee C – Mr Cornford (NASUWT – The Teachers' Union). From Committee D (Local Education Authority) – Cllr Ali and Cllr Burgess.

Absent: Revd Carn (Committee A – Methodist), Revd Pitkeathly (Committee A – Free Churches), Mr Syed (Committee A – Muslim) and Cllr N Jupp (Committee D – Local Education Authority).

## Part I

### 1. Chairman's Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all members of SACRE to the hybrid meeting being held in Committee Room 3 and via Microsoft Teams.

### 2. Membership Updates

- 2.1 Members of the Council noted that Father Ben Scott (Church of England) and Cllr John Dabell (Local Education Authority) have joined SACRE as members of Committees B and D respectively.
- 2.2 Members also noted that Mr Ben Cornford, representative of NASUWT – The Teachers' Union, has stood down from Committee C.

### 3. Members' Interests

- 3.1 Cllr Dabell declared two personal interests as a Christian and that his daughter is head teacher of a primary school in East Grinstead.
- 3.2 Cllr Pendleton declared that she is a school governor at Bishop Tufnell CE Primary School in Felpham.

### 4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 4.1 In reference to para 27.2, it was confirmed that the Agreed Syllabus and Collective Worship guidance will be made accessible online in Autumn 2023.
- 4.2 In reference to para 27.3, Mr Wagstaff clarified the comments and re-assured members that most West Sussex schools have been rated 'Good' by Ofsted.
- 4.3 Mrs Hammond informed members that the questionnaires being developed for primary and secondary schools on the delivery of Religious Education and Collective Worship have been updated and are due to be sent to schools electronically at the end of September. She thanked the Working Group for their feedback.
- 4.4 In reference to para 29.4, Mrs Hammond informed members that the Annual Report 2022/23 has been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) and is available on NASACRE's website.
- 4.5 In reference to para 30.2, Mrs Hammond said that a review of West Sussex SACRE's Terms of Reference is in progress and would be added to the agenda for the next meeting on 20 November 2023.  
**Action:** Clerk to add to the agenda and liaise with Mrs Hammond.
- 4.6 In reference to para 30.5, Mrs Hammond advised that a Working Group will be formed at the beginning of September to develop a newsletter targeted at schools in promotion of West Sussex SACRE. Members agreed that the newsletter should be issued immediately following half-term term in the week commencing 30 October 2023.

**Action:** Mrs Hammond to provide members with a progress update via email.

- 4.7 Mrs Hammond thanked members for their attempts in trying to agree a date for the 'World Religions and World Views' roadshow originally planned to be held in June or July. She explained that SACRE members would have their own stand and exhibit material for their representative group in addition to promoting West Sussex SACRE.
- 4.8 Members were in agreement that the roadshow should be held as two twilight sessions across consecutive weeks on a Tuesday and Thursday from 4.30pm-7.00pm and that teachers, school governors, community leaders and West Sussex County Councillors should be invited. It was suggested that thought is given to holding the sessions across a cluster of rooms in the chosen venue.  
**Action:** Mrs Hammond to confirm the dates and venues for the roadshows following the meeting and update members via email.
- 4.9 The University of Chichester's Bognor Regis campus was suggested as a potential venue for the two roadshows.
- 4.10 In reference to para 31.4, Mrs Hammond said that she had not been made aware of any ideas from members.
- 4.11 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2023 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

## **5. Agreed Syllabus Update**

- 5.1 Mrs Hammond reported that no training had been delivered since the previous meeting.
- 5.2 Mrs Hammond reminded members that the schools' questionnaires on the delivery of Religious Education and Collective Worship are to be issued at the end of September.
- 5.3 Mrs Hammond reminded members that the current local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education came into effect in 2021 and needs to be renewed by April 2026.
- 5.4 Mrs Hammond reported that work had taken place during the pandemic to consult young people as stakeholders in the production of the Agreed Syllabus produced in 2021.
- 5.5 Mrs Hammond told members she believed it is highly unlikely that there will be significant changes to Religious Education after listening to speakers at NASACRE's annual conference on 22 May.
- 5.6 Members were in agreement with the Chairman's suggestion that the West Sussex Youth Cabinet is involved in the consultation process for the Agreed Syllabus 2025-30.  
**Action:** Clerk to liaise with the Youth Cabinet to take forward.

## **6. Update from Assistant Director of Education and Skills**

- 6.1 Mr Wagstaff reported that the October edition of the Education Matters publication will feature a curriculum theme and suggested that SACRE supplies an article for inclusion in promotion of the two World Religions and World Views roadshows in October and November.  
**Action:** Mrs Hammond to lead on providing the article and Clerk to arrange its inclusion.
- 6.2 Mr Wagstaff reported that there is a national challenge in relation to the recruitment and retention of specialist RE teachers. He added that work is underway to try and understand the recruitment and retention challenges in primary and secondary schools in West Sussex.
- 6.3 Mr Wagstaff informed members that many schools nationwide are set to transition into academies between now and 2030 and therefore control their own RE provision.
- 6.4 Mr Wagstaff suggested exploring changing demand among other Local Education Authorities' Agreed Syllabuses. He explained that the County Council is in direct competition with Diocesan syllabuses.
- 6.5 In answer to a member's question, Mr Wagstaff confirmed that academies can make their own choices about their Agreed Syllabus but must still follow the national RE programme set by the DfE. He added that around 30-35% of West Sussex schools are presently academies, and that this is expected to increase.
- 6.6 Mr Wagstaff informed members that he has a meeting with the Chief Executives of local multi-academy trusts during October half-term and will update SACRE through Mrs Hammond.  
**Action:** Mrs Hammond to email an update to members when available.
- 6.7 Mrs Beer, co-opted member, offered to share research on multi-academy trusts carried out in her role as Senior Lecturer in Education (Primary Religious Education and Primary English) at the University of Chichester with Mr Wagstaff and Mrs Hammond.  
**Action:** Clerk to obtain research from Mrs Beer and share with officers.
- 6.8 A member highlighted that Chichester Diocese covers East and West Sussex and recommended Hampshire and Norfolk County Councils' Agreed Syllabuses as good examples of multi-disciplinary approaches to teaching.
- 6.9 Resolved – SACRE noted the verbal update.

## **7. A Reflection on the Annual NASACRE Conference**

- 7.1 Mrs Hammond reported that she represented West Sussex SACRE at NASACRE's annual conference and AGM: 'Celebrating 30 years: SACREs for the Future' on 22 May and that SACRE member Rev Pitkeathly (Committee A – Free Churches) was also in attendance.
- 7.2 Mrs Hammond summarised the topics discussed by the keynote speakers and highlighted the main takeaways relevant to SACRE:
- The event provided useful networking opportunities;
  - It was helpful to receive an update on the national agenda;
  - The national picture for SACRE and RE has not changed and is unlikely to do so in the short-term;
  - It is clear WSCC is not the best nor the worst performing Local Education Authority and has room for improvement. SACRE must focus on the development plan in place and strengthen collaborative working between its members.
- 7.3 Mrs Hammond reported that she learned about an independent review into how government engages with faith, 'Does Government do God?', published by Colin Bloom – Independent Faith Engagement Advisor.  
**Action:** Clerk to circulate a link to the review to members and discuss under an agenda item at the next SACRE meeting.
- 7.4 A member said they believe there is not enough emphasis on the promotion of faiths and that children need to be educated about RE in order to make their own informed choices.
- 7.5 A member asked for consideration to be given to changing SACRE's meeting start time of 10.30am to a twilight session because the current timing takes up some members' classroom teaching hours.  
**Action:** Clerk to look into meeting arrangement options.
- 7.6 In response to a member's concern for RE recruitment, retention and non-specialist cover teaching, Mr Wagstaff said that this is a long-standing issue in primary schools especially and their teachers are expected to teach all subjects.
- 7.7 Mr Wagstaff suggested that SACRE members' external expertise could lend support to schools and the autumn roadshows could provide an opportunity to develop links with schools.
- 7.8 Resolved – SACRE noted the verbal report.

## 8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 Mrs Bell (Committee A – Jewish) invited members to attend the guided Jewish Living Exhibition based at the Brighton Jewish

Community for three weeks from 20 September, as organised by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Mrs Bell also mentioned that a teacher training session on Judaism will be held at the same venue from 4.30pm-6.00pm on 19 September.

**Action:** Clerk to circulate the event details and flyer to members following the meeting and arrange for promotional communications to be sent to school head teachers.

8.2 Mr Soni (Committee A – Hindu) raised Navaratri as another autumn event of interest and members welcomed further information on the Hindu festival.

Action: Clerk to follow-up with Mr Soni after the meeting and request event details for circulation to members.

8.3 Mrs Hammond informed members that former member Ms Grace Waker has expressed an interest in re-joining SACRE as a co-opted member.

## **9. Dates of Future Meetings**

9.1 SACRE noted that the next meeting would be held on 20 November 2023 at County Hall, Chichester, with the hybrid option for joining being available to those who require it.

The meeting ended at 12.28 pm.

Chairman