

+STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

7 June 2016

Present:-

Group A: Christian and Other Religion and Belief Communities (with the exception of the Church of England)

Ms M Hext (Methodist rep) Mr K Denby (Humanist rep) , Ms J Taylorson (Buddhist rep), Ms H Hastie (Bahia'i rep), Mr R Halsey (Jewish rep), Mr B Lane (URC rep) and Mr R Nathwani (Hindu rep)

Group B: The Church of England

Mr M Dearden; Ms T Wilson and Ms P Hammett,

Group C: Teachers' Associations

Ms L Clay (NASUWT) ,Mr J Goody (ATL), Mr E Mihas (FE), Ms W Harrison (NUT) Ms S Shute (NATRE Sec) Ms G Winnall (NATRE Primary)

Group D: The County Council

Councillors P Colthorpe, A Hannan, M Squires and R Younger-Ross

Co-opted Members

Mr J Roberts

Advisor

Mr E Pawson

Apologies:-

Ms N Nation, C Walmsley, C Hulbert, T Pritchard, Cornish, Walshe, J Berry, C Channon, T Griffiths, G Langtree, J Marshall and G Teece

1 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2016 be signed as a correct record.

2 Matters of Urgency

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

3 Devon SACRE Membership

Mr Pawson welcomed new members to their first meeting Helena Hastie ((Baha'i Rep) and Mr Edgar Mihas (FE Rep) and reported on current vacancies and members discussed the representation of the Sikh and Buddhist faiths. In view of the lack of attendance by the Sikh representative at meetings Mr Pawson would make contact with Sikh community representatives about a proposed nomination of a recent convert who was active nationally but not involved locally and report to the next meeting. Ms Jude Taylorson was attending as an observer for the Buddhist Community and indicated her willingness to serve as a member for the time being pending any further nomination. Generally, attendance was positive and that Devon SACRE was active and working well.

RESOLVED that Ms Jude Taylorson be appointed as the Buddhist Representative.

4

Annual Report

The Council considered the draft SACRE Annual Report for 2014/15 which, when ratified, would be forwarded to the DfE and NASACRE. The report covered:

- the Devon Agreed Syllabus review process and assessment;
- GCSE examination results 2014 - an interpretation;
- school monitoring visits, Monitoring Ofsted inspections for RE and SMSC;
- SACRE Constitution review;
- SACRE membership;
- professional support for RE;
- Holocaust Memorial Day 2015;
- Interfaith Focus: Faith and Belief visitor training
- Interfaith conference on British values
- SACRE working groups and publications
- working with other agencies
- training and Continuing Professional Development; and
- Collective worship.

Salient points in the draft Annual Report included the following:

- GCSE Religious Studies exam entry trends across Devon Schools and academies from 2011 to 2015: there had been a drop of entry from 2014 to 2015 which required further consideration as to the reasons, attributable possibly by the declining number of specialist teachers and decline in the number of short course entries
- 2015 GCSE Religious Studies entries as percentage of the cohort 2015
- Religious Studies Full Course (which required further checks and analysis before final publication of the Report)
- concerns about: compliance time allocation or low examination entry/pass levels for Education: the quality of learning and study time for Religious Education which may have contributed to a reduction in examination results in the A* - C grades; those schools which were not offering students their statutory opportunity to study Religious Education at Key Stage 4; and the difficulty for schools in maintaining standards when the new, more challenging GCSEs were introduced; issues relating to the narrowness of the syllabus for GCSE RE confined to two religions; schools not offering GCSE but which would argue were compliant
- SACRE's intention to work with Ofsted to improve the teaching of RE.

The draft Report remained subject to comments by SACRE Members before ratification and submission.

RESOLVED that the draft Report be noted and any comments be submitted to Mr Pawson by Monday, 13 June 2016 for consideration.

5

Interfaith Focus: Faith and Belief Training, Interfaith Conference

Mr Roberts reported on Faith and Belief training workshops organised by the Devon Faith Belief Forum with SACRE, in collaboration with the Devon Faith Belief Forum at the Exeter Community Centre, designed to help build people's communication skills amongst Devon's diverse faith and belief communities. There was a plan to create a database of names of potential visitors for teachers as a useful resource for schools and community organisations. Ms Taylorson commented on this example of effective interfaith and community work.

Mr Pawson indicated that a Directory of Visitors was being compiled for Schools which would be available on the Devon Belief and Faith Forum website.

Mr Denby also reported on the BHA accredited courses available from this Autumn.

Mr Pawson explained that planning was underway for a conference in Interfaith Week, 2016, with the theme 'Not in God's Name' as part of the PREVENT Agenda. Ms Spence referred to the success of last year's conference and requested that School Governors should also be invited.

6 Learn/Teach/Lead Religious Education (LTLRE)

Mr Pawson reported on SACRE's annual conference arranged for 20th/21 October 2016 at St Mellion, Cornwall for teachers and others, details of which would be publicised shortly.

Ms Wilson, the Project Lead, reported on work taking place with Schools through the local hubs on implementation of assessments without levels following SACRE's commitment to support and contribute to LTRE's project (rather than develop its own scheme) which was achieving national recognition. Mr Denby also referred on the BHA on-line resource for teachers: <https://humanism.org.uk/education/teachers/>

7 Working Group: Assessment Project

Mr Roberts reported on:

- the importance of financial support available from SACRE for the project involving 15 people with the LTL RE programme and support from Dr Barbara Winterskill (ex-HMI)
- the need to engage RE teachers in the training programme outside of their teaching commitments
- the complex governance arrangements in schools and the different practices of schools in their assessment of RE teaching and learning
- materials being developed for use by schools and the work of the Diocese in this respect relating to the syllabus and exemplars of good practice
- teaching and assessment issues throughout the 4 Key Stages (including the loss of a clear syllabus and assessment framework for KS 3) and the lack of guidelines particularly for KS 1 teaching, the need for further dialogue and the importance of sharing good practice
- the difficulties involved from pupil transition from primary to secondary
- the lack of government guidance and the need for a flexible approach and to avoid a prescriptive formula, bearing in mind the rapidly changing school environment.

The Chair thanked Mr Roberts for his update and noted that this remained a work-in progress for the SACRE Working Group.

8 The Place of Non-Religious Worldviews in the RE Curriculum

The Council received a paper by Dr Satvinder Juss on a ruling by the High Court in November 2015 entitled 'Legal guidance on what it means for local authorities, academies, schools, teachers Agreed Syllabus Conferences, and SACREs'. The guidance said that The High Court had ruled that the Department for Education had made 'an error of law' in its specification of content for the new GCSE Religious Studies (RS) for English schools. The error was in asserting that teaching the new RS GCSE would meet the legal requirements for the provision of Religious Education (RE) in general. The High Court said this assertion was unlawful because statutory RE in schools without a religious character must be 'objective, critical and pluralistic' and a syllabus that covered religions in detail but did not give pupils the opportunity to learn similarly about a nonreligious worldview such as Humanism would not meet this requirement.

A second paper by the Chair of NASACRE and Chair of AREIAC was circulated questioning the guidance and assertions that to include minority religions and exclude Humanism would *almost* be unlawful; and to require syllabuses to study Humanism if a minority religion was not studied. The legislation they suggest was clear that RE syllabuses must reflect the fact the religions must be studied were in the main Christianity and the principal religions represented in Great Britain and these were to be determined by each Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Mr Denby in introducing the Guidance paper and surrounding issues asked that SACRE provide further written guidance to Schools stating that the new Devon Syllabus for RE (agreed with Torbay and Plymouth SACREs) met current legal requirements with its element of Non-Religious Worldviews. Other members indicated that it was not necessary to write directly to schools specifically on any one aspect of the Agreed Syllabus as it currently did provide for learning about Non-Religious World Views (and supported by resources available from the BHA).

RESOLVED that in the SACRE News-Letter to schools (and other partners) reference be made to issues highlighted by the High Court Judgement and indicating that in this SACRE's view the Agreed Devon Syllabus for RE does meet current legal requirements.

9 **Understanding Christianity**

Mr Pawson and Ms Wilson reported on new learning resources available for teachers produced by Paul Coulter available on the website: <http://www.understandingchristianity.org/>

Mrs Wilson reported on a paper, circulated at the meeting, covering a set of material and training resources to enable pupils from 4 to 14 to develop an understanding of Christianity and the identified 8 core concepts and details of each unit of 'core learning' and their aims and outcomes.

10 **Educational Excellence Everywhere: the Implications of the Government Plans for Academies and the Future of SACREs**

This item was deferred to the next meeting pending publication of the White Paper.

11 **Educating Ourselves**

The Council received a presentation from Gerry Winnall on her article published in RE Today entitled 'Wandering and wondering' on her initiative in an urban Exeter School allowing her class of 5-6 year olds, after registration, a short time for outside reflection and sanctuary by 'wandering and wondering' and appreciating the flora and fauna (in an urban setting). Members commended the initiative and approach and the benefits for the children and their teacher at the start of a busy school day.

In line with such an initiative Councillor Younger-Ross reported on grants available from the Groundwork Trust (Tesco Bags of Help scheme) for Community groups which could be used for Schools to create peaceful and external quiet green sanctuaries for children and staff. Further details available:

<http://www.groundwork.org.uk/News/groundwork-to-administer>

12 **National Developments**

This item covering the following was deferred to the next meeting:

- Religious Education Council
- REC Commission: teacher recruitment, PR Group, All-Party
- Parliamentary Group (APPG), RE Quality Mark
- National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE)
- New Examination Specifications, Teacher Surveys

13 **Holocaust Memorial Day 2017**

Mr Pawson reported that, following the success this year, planning for 2017 was underway and details would be reported to the next meeting.

14 **Remembering John Hull**

Mr Pawson referred to the death of John Hull in July 2015 aged 80, a distinguished and inspirational academic and teacher of Religious Education both nationally and internationally.

15 **SW SACRE Conference (Monday, 7 March)**

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

16 **Dates of Future SACRE Meetings**

RSOLVED that future meeting be held on Tuesday, 1 November; Wednesday, 8 February 2017; and Wednesday, 7 June at 10.00 am at County Hall, Exeter

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.40 pm