

AT A MEETING of the STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) held at Fernhill School and Language College, Farnborough, on 7 June 2011

PRESENT

Chairman

a Councillor P. Mutton (Hampshire County Council)

Vice-Chairman

p Councillor R Muschamp (Hampshire County Council)

p Mr. Mohammed Ansar	-	Muslim
p Councillor Mrs C. Bailey	-	Hampshire County Council
p Mrs. Maureen Barnes	-	Teachers' Association
p Mrs. Elaine Bellchambers	-	Higher Education – Co-opted
a Mr. Tony Blackshaw	-	Church of England
a Mrs J. Chong	-	Roman Catholic
a Mrs R. Costambeys	-	Secondary - Co-opted
p Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato	-	Shia Muslim
a Councillor Sam Darragh	-	Hampshire County Council
a Councillor Mrs Liz Fairhurst	-	Hampshire County Council
a Ms. Emily Fletcher	-	Church of England
a Mrs. Pat Fry	-	United Reformed Church
a Mrs Maeve Gordon-James	-	Buddhist
p Ms Patricia Hannam	-	Support Officer
a Mr Colin How	-	Methodist
p Mr Chris Hughes	-	Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches
p Mrs Elizabeth Jenkerson	-	Baha'i
p Mrs Joyce Johnson	-	Church of England
p Mrs Julie Lemon	-	Special Education – Co-opted
p Mrs Judith Lowndes	-	Support Officer
a Ms Jackie McGregor	-	Salvation Army
p Miss Margaret Matthews	-	Society of Friends
p Mrs Linda Miatt	-	Teachers' Association
p Mrs Jean O'Reilly	-	Humanism – Co-opted
p Mrs Jane Pridmore	-	Teachers' Association
a Mr. Ganshin Rock	-	Buddhist
a Mr Paul Tipple	-	Baptist Union
p Major Suryaparsad Upadhya	-	Hindu
p Mrs J Warren	-	Higher Education – co-opted
a Rev. Howard Wright	-	Church of England
p Mrs. Jenny Zeffertt	-	Jewish
Observer – Mr Gary Green	-	Head of RE/PDL, Fernhill School

Prior to the start of the meeting Gary Green, Head of RE and PDL at Fernhill School and Language College gave a presentation. The presentation centred on demonstrating a lesson on forgiveness built around the Cycle of Learning and how P4C (Philosophy for Children) is incorporated. He informed the Council that there was a move to incorporate the Cycle of Learning and P4C principles into other curriculum subjects. In answer to questions from Members the students mentioned that they felt that RE was a relevant subject, that it broadened their ideas and encouraged them to ask deeper questions.

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs P Mutton, Councillor Mrs L Fairhurst, Councillor Mrs S Darragh, Mrs D Casson, Mrs J Chong, Mrs P Fry, Mr C How, Mr P Tipple, Rev G Rock, and Rev H Wright, Mr T Blackshaw, and Mrs M Gordon James.

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that, where they believed that they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally, at the time of the debate, declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code .

No declarations of interest were made.

71. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2011 were approved and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

Matters Arising:-

Item 63 – Monitoring Sub group

Letters of congratulations had been sent to schools with good RE. A question was raised about whether letters should also be sent to improving schools and to those that were not doing so well as a means of encouragement. It was agreed that following the 2011 GCSE results, Patricia Hannam would pick five schools which had made significant improvement and send letters in consultation with the SACRE monitoring sub-group. Members were advised that termly network group meetings for secondary RE teachers took place at three venues in the county to share good practice.

Item 66 – White Paper for Educational Reform

Letters had been sent by the Chairman to Michael Gove and the Bishop of Oxford about the status of RE in the English Baccalaureate, but no reply had been received yet. It was noted that although letters had also been sent to Secondary Schools, some Heads of RE had not received theirs.

72. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Vice-Chairman welcomed Joyce Johnson, a new representative for the Church of England, Mrs Linda Miatt, a new teachers' representative and Sheikh Fazle Abbas, representing the Shia Muslim community.

Members were informed that Dawn Casson, the Head of St Lawrence Primary School in Alton, one of the Teachers' representatives had resigned from SACRE due to work commitments.

The Vice-Chairman informed the Council that the Chairman had met with the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services to discuss SACRE and, in particular, the Council's concerns about the time allocated for SACRE monitoring work; the outcome was that the five allotted days had been maintained for the current year.

73. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

74. THE NATIONAL RE CELEBRATIONS MONTH: A REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES THAT TOOK PLACE IN HAMPSHIRE SCHOOLS

The Council received the report of the Director of Children's Services on the events carried out in Hampshire as part of the national RE Celebrations month in March 2011 (item 6 in the Minute Book)

Commenting on the many events that had taken place during RE Celebrations month, the officers stated that they had all been successful. Some SACRE members who had taken part in 'Question Time' panels expressed the opinion that they had found the experience interesting, but challenging, and those who had presented prizes to the three schools that had won national competitions during the RE Celebrations month had found it an enjoyable one and been made very welcome by the schools. In addition to the events mentioned in the report, Major Upadhya informed Members about the 'Meet the Gurkhas' event that had taken place at Connaught School, the aim of which had been to explain the special relationship between Britain and Nepal; he indicated that this type of event would be continued as there was a lack of understanding of the historical links between the two countries.

Members asked whether any of the 'Question Time' events and the 'Not in my Name' theatre piece used in the 'Islamophobia' event at Fernhill School had been recorded for future use. It was agreed that Patricia Hannam would look into the possibility of devising a Cycle of Learning and a pack around the concept of Islamophobia and using a recording of the theatre piece.

Suggestions for future initiatives included an idea that some SACRE members might consider going into schools as speakers about their faith in a type of 'An Audience with...' event and that the 'Question Time' panel format should be developed and encouraged with schools, with panels including not only members of religious faiths and beliefs, but also the police, local councillors and other local people, to cover contentious issues across the curriculum.

It was also suggested that there should be some input for SACRE Members who might visit secondary schools as faith representatives to talk to students about their faith. It was recommended that they should be better informed about the GCSE curriculum and the types of questions that are set.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That SACRE notes the report
- (ii) That SACRE considers any further initiatives that might be developed from the celebrations month

75. SACRE MEMBERSHIP: A REPORT FROM THE SUB GROUP

The Council received the report of the sub group convened to discuss criteria for membership of SACRE (item 7 in the Minute Book).

Members were informed that there had been a long and wide-ranging discussion about criteria that might be applied to those groups which could be invited to join Group A of SACRE, but this had proved a difficult task. This had included considering the intentions of the legislators when drawing up the original legislation and the legal implications of going against the current statute. It was commented that one difficulty lay in the interpretation of the words religion and belief. Arising from the discussions the suggestion of forming a fifth group within SACRE which would include those whose belief systems were not covered by Group A was made, and this had been referred to Hampshire legal department for their opinion. Members were advised that a reply was still awaited.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE notes the report and awaits feedback from Hampshire legal department

76. MONITORING SUB GROUP

The Council received the report of the monitoring sub group about monitoring visits and GCSE provision (item 8 in the Minute Book).

Members were advised of the findings of the monitoring visits to one primary school and five secondary schools. Concerns were expressed that some of the secondary schools were non-compliant with the legal requirement to provide RE at KS4 for non-GCSE pupils, but were informed that this was the decision of the Headteacher not the Head of RE and the responsibility for ensuring compliance lay with the governors of the school, not the County Council. Discussion focused on what could be done to encourage schools to maintain RE and whether, where schools were known to be not-compliant, SACRE should write to the governors.

There was a consensus among Members with Patricia Hannam's view that RE had a lot to offer schools and that it could help with whole school improvement. Further she asked that encouragement should be given to schools to maintain RE by stressing that good RE GCSE results enhance a school's overall data. She also suggested that RE can be part of advancing an ethos of respect, care and mutual awareness which can lead to improvement, and that RE would turn children into thinkers, which would impact on all curriculum subjects. Members were also informed that in the new OFSTED inspections for 2012 Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural provision in schools would be given a higher profile.

Patricia Hannam explained that her investigations into the different pass rates of various GCSE syllabuses had shown that there was no evidence that there was any difference between them. Monitoring visits to secondary schools in the next academic year would focus on raising attainment at GCSE.

Members were updated about Academy status for schools - currently eight out of seventy Hampshire Secondary schools had already become Academies, but that numbers for the next academic year were not known yet. It was confirmed to the Council that SACRE would do no monitoring in either Academies or free schools, and that the governors of these schools would be responsible for compliance for the provision of RE as its provision was reflected in their funding arrangements. Discussion took place on the possible appointment of a representative from an academy as a co-opted member on SACRE; some expressed the opinion that as all Academies were independent bodies then they could not be representative of all. It was agreed that a decision would be deferred until the autumn meeting when the Council would be provided with more information on the numbers of schools becoming Academies, but it was also noted that it was important to maintain contacts with the Academies.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That SACRE notes the report.

- (ii) That SACRE endorses the proposal to focus the next round of secondary school monitoring visits on KS4 provision for RE GCSE students.
- (iii) That Patricia Hannam brings an update on Academies to the meeting on 8 November 2011 for SACRE to consider whether to invite a representative from an Academy onto SACRE as a co-opted member.
- (iv) That the Monitoring Sub Group considers the issue of non-compliance within schools for RE at KS4 for non-GCSE pupils.

77. THE WHITE PAPER FOR EDUCATION REFORM: AN UPDATE ABOUT THE PLACE OF RE IN THE ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE

The Council considered the report of the Director of Children's Services on the potential implications of the White Paper for RE in Hampshire schools (item 9 in the Minute Book).

Patricia Hannam introduced her report by explaining that the Secretary of State had still to make a decision on the subjects which would constitute the English Baccalaureate Measure for 2011. Two recent developments were mentioned: there had been a cross-party debate at Westminster Hall about the inclusion of RE and that at the RE Council Nick Gibb, the Minister for Schools, had agreed to consider whether two out of three humanities subjects should be taken. The short course for RE is not being considered in the discussions.

She expressed her concerns that if the decision excluded RE then there would be a different picture for the take up of GCSE RE in the next academic year and the provision for RE in general at GCSE. Members were advised that it looked possible that one sixth form college was axing its AS/A level RE course for 2011. The Council was informed that she intended to carry out a survey of RE courses provided in sixth form colleges and would present her findings at the November meeting.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE notes the report and its implications for RE in Hampshire secondary schools.

78. NASACRE CONFERENCE AND NASACRE AGM

The Council received a report from Mrs Elizabeth Jenkerson who had attended the NASACRE Conference on 31 March 2011 and the NASACRE AGM on 11 May 2011 as Hampshire SACRE's representative (item 10 in the Minute Book).

In addition to referring to the visual summary of the NASACRE Conference in March (appendix A) Elizabeth Jenkerson told Members that it had been a valuable experience and good for networking. She informed Members that the common theme had been that there would be changes ahead for RE, but that it would survive, especially if everyone works together; also that the meeting was

generally positive about the current situation despite concerns relating to the English Bacculaureate.

She gave a short verbal report on the NASACRE AGM, highlighting the provocative keynote address from Robert Beckford, about 'What we want children to get from RE', and the presentations by pupils who had received Westhill awards. Members were informed by Judith Lowndes that Hampshire had received a Westhill award a few years ago for a project that had been run in schools in the north and south of the county on community cohesion.

She had been impressed by some schools that met together in a forum similar to a 'youth SACRE' and wondered whether this could be something that Hampshire SACRE could consider. It was agreed that this would be revisited at the next meeting on 8 November 2011 and Members were asked to email Patricia Hannam if they were interested in pursuing this idea with her.

Thanks were given to Elizabeth for attending both of the meetings on SACRE's behalf.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE notes the report.

79. NATIONAL RESILIENCE PROJECT CONFERENCE

The Council received a report from Mrs Maureen Barnes who had attended the National RESilience Project Conference on 12 April 2011 (item 11 in the Minute Book).

Maureen Barnes explained to Members that the RESilience project was a programme that had been offered free to schools until March 2011 to increase the confidence of RE teachers in addressing contentious issues, such as violent extremism. She indicated that findings had shown that communities living with extremism were better equipped to deal with the issues than others, and that Hampshire's schools were quite well equipped. The Conference delegates had agreed that the RESilience programme had been a valuable tool and that, although it had ended, the challenge was to continue to promote its ideals, as it was important to make schools a safe environment for children to discuss difficult issues; the involvement of local SACREs in the work had been suggested. There was a consensus among Members that the meaning of extremist behaviour was a grey area that needed to be addressed. A suggestion was made that a presentation should be made to SACRE about extremism and the work being done locally with young people, and that the Council should consider what it could do to become involved.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE notes the report.

80. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A vote of thanks was given to Fernhill School for allowing SACRE to use their premises and to the Head of RE and his students for their presentation.

Major Upadhyia reported to Members that he had heard very complimentary remarks about *Living Difference* at a recent RE Conference that he had attended. Patricia Hannam informed Members that *Living Difference Revised* was being taken up by Camden Council and was being considered by others.

Acknowledgements were given by Members to the Vice-chairman for her first meeting in the Chair.

81. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 8 November 2011 at 1.30pm at Elizabeth II Court, Winchester.

Prior to the main meeting there would be a presentation by Mr Mohammed Ansar on the Muslim faith at 1.30 pm.