

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

NETWORK MEETING OF LOCAL SACREs

NOTES OF THE MEETING held on Wednesday 27 November 2013 at 10.00 am in the Wellington Room, Winchester

Present:

Bournemouth - Stephen Chappell

Hampshire - Councillor Roz Chadd

Patricia Hannam

Tony Blackshaw

Sue Butler

Isle of Wight - Joy Buckley

Harry Kirby

Ralph Hodd

Poole/Dorset - Derek Holloway

Portsmouth - Peter Davies

Southampton - Elizabeth Jenkerson

Surrey - Margaret Hicks

Rachel Boxer

West Berkshire - Sandra Wylie

West Sussex - Nigel Bloodworth

Peter Griffiths

Wiltshire, Reading, Wokingham - David Rees

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Jan Lever (Wiltshire, Reading, Wokingham), Lynda Ford-Horne (Bournemouth), Rubina Nassar (Bournemouth), Mary Douglas (Wiltshire), Julia Baker-Smith (Isle of Wight), and Mark Cawte (Swindon)

Councillor Roz Chadd welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 12 June 2013 were agreed.

2. Updates from each local authority's SACRE

Each representative gave a short update on their level of Local Authority support, agendas, monitoring procedures, review of their Agreed Syllabus and their procedures for admitting new members. Members had received email copies of Annual Reports that were available.

Hampshire

SACRE has a good level of support with 2 part-time advisers for RE; 4 County Councillors sit on SACRE and there is support and interest for RE at senior levels in authority. Hampshire also has a strong Interfaith Network. SACRE is treated as other County Council committees, with meeting papers appearing on the Council's website. A sample agenda was circulated, which other members agreed was very similar to their own. The 2 advisers monitor RE through 10 half day school visits per year, supported by SACRE's Monitoring Subgroup, which

meets to discuss the visits and GCSE results and report to SACRE. An Annual Report in the original format is still produced. The review of the Agreed Syllabus would take place from late autumn 2014 in conjunction with Southampton and Portsmouth who share the syllabus. Following a request from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints to join SACRE a standard procedure for any future requests was set up. Hampshire's Youth Voice continues to meet once a term and they will be making a presentation to SACRE in the coming year. The next meeting is scheduled for December, at which the REC Young Ambassador's from Perins School will be giving a presentation of their work.

Surrey

The Local Authority had been unaware of their statutory duties, but now meetings and agendas were published on the Council's website. The budget is reasonably healthy. The main concern was the lack of specialist RE teachers in some schools. It was acknowledged that monitoring had slipped, although schools had been sent a questionnaire to assess teachers' needs. They were hoping to restart their Youth SACRE.

Portsmouth

SACRE is treated in a semi-official manner as regards meetings; the three meetings rotating between a school, a faith centre and the council offices. Some concern was noted about monitoring the implementation of the syllabus. No report was produced for 2012 and in 2011 a newsheet had been produced instead. There was no set procedure for admitting new members. A successful student enrichment conference had been held in the summer and a NASACRE Westhill award would finance another one in 2014. SACRE finances artefact boxes for schools. It was noted that there were a lot of positives for RE in Portsmouth, but the retirement of their clerk had caused administrative problems as they had not been replaced as yet.

Poole/Dorset

It was acknowledged that monitoring was a weak area in both authorities and there had been a shift towards resourcing and supporting schools. Neither authority had produced a report since QCA was abolished, but a development plan was published which covered accountability; there were plans for a triennial report. It was anticipated that the Agreed Syllabus might have an addition, as there was no capacity to review. Their new member procedure consisted of prospective members observing meetings and then making a presentation prior to a decision by SACRE.

Isle of Wight

Joy Buckley was introduced as the new chair of SACRE. Previously there had been no support from the local authority, but the link had been restored as the relationship with Hampshire Children's Services is developing. Councillors were now attending SACRE meetings. The clerk organises all the business and writes the report. Because of the lack of support over several years, SACRE had become pro-active and dynamic. For monitoring SACRE currently look at the Section 48 reports to assess RE, but the aim was to set up a system similar to Hampshire's. SACRE will be subsidizing schools to gain the RE Quality Mark in an attempt to raise the profile of the subject. A development day is planned to consider the Agreed Syllabus. CPD courses funded by SACRE had not been well attended as head teachers

were unwilling to let teachers out of schools. There was now a NATRE group on the island to support teachers. It was felt that RE was in a much better position now on the island than previously.

West Berkshire

The LA does provide support and there is a consultant. An annual meeting is held with other Berkshire SACREs. Monitoring was considered a weak area. A development plan is produced rather than a report. There is a network for secondary teachers and teachers are invited to make presentations to SACRE. It was felt that a way to engage schools that were not keen on RE was needed. The Agreed Syllabus was reviewed in September 2012. There was no procedure for admitting new groups.

Wiltshire, Reading, Wokingham

David Rees, attending on behalf of Jan Lever, gave a brief report. He indicated that agendas were similar to those of other authorities. In Reading and Wokingham a 'places of worship' trail had been run which had been well-attended and would be repeated. Network meetings for teachers were held in schools in Wokingham.

West Sussex

Peter Griffiths was introduced as the new Chairman of West Sussex SACRE. SACRE is a well-supported with a number of Councillors as members and meetings are organised similarly to Hampshire. Cuts had removed all subject advisers which had left SACRE with less influence. A monitoring sub-group had recently been set up as it was felt there was not enough information about what was happening in schools. There are support groups for secondary schools and training on the RE Quality Mark is being given. A strategy to hold academies to account for the teaching of RE was being developed. The review of the Agreed Syllabus, which had been put on hold until the publication of the RE Review, had been restarted. It was commented that their process of admitting new groups was clumsy, but they had not had any requests.

Bournemouth

Stephen Chappell indicated that this was his last meeting as Linda Ford-Horne would be taking over as the new Chairman of Bournemouth SACRE. It was noted that meeting agendas were similar to other authorities, except that a volunteer gives a moment of reflection at the start of the meeting. Support from the LA is adequate and councillors had been given a presentation on their statutory duties and the teaching of RE. The annual report is published on the council website. The Agreed Syllabus review would take place in 2015, jointly with Poole, but few changes were anticipated following the RE Review. There was no set procedure for admitting new groups.

Southampton

It was indicated that currently Southampton SACRE had no chairman or officers, but it was hoped that this would soon be remedied. The Agreed Syllabus would be jointly reviewed with Hampshire and Portsmouth. It was hoped to make links with the Southampton Council of Faiths which is a very successful organisation.

3. SACRE Members' Training

Patricia Hannam told the group of Hampshire's recent new member training, indicating that it had been successful, with members attending from the Isle of Wight, Southampton and Reading.

4. NASACRE matters

Elizabeth Jenkerson, newly appointed to NASACRE, reported that the decision by NASACRE to restrict access to its website had resulted in an increase in membership. Although the SW Conference in Somerset was planned, the SE Conference in London would not be held. It was suggested that this group should consider running it. No decision was taken on this.

Following discussion on the value of NASACRE membership, the consensus among members was that it was important to belong to the national organisation and to become active in using it. Tony Blackshaw reported that the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, had held discussions with the bishops and was intending to speak with NASACRE, the RE Council and AREIAC concerning the unintended consequences of his education measures on RE, which the meeting felt was a good sign.

5. Update and discussion on other national matters:

The members primarily discussed the outcome of the RE Review by the RE Council.

Attention focussed on the recommendation concerning the establishment of 'eight regional centres or 'hubs' for religious education, which would be centres of teacher training, CPD, curriculum design, piloting initiatives, research, dissemination and policy. Affiliated to the hubs and working collaboratively with them would be local universities, schools, SACREs, Diocesan Boards of Education (DBEs) and faith communities. Each hub would work as a beacon of excellence and as a focal point for engagement. (Recommendation 4 page 38 of the Review)

Derek Holloway, a member of the RE Council steering group, explained that the idea of the hubs was envisaged as a way of supporting RE in every possible way and he raised the question of whether this group should consider becoming a hub. He indicated that other people would also be looking to form hubs and as a group that was already networking were perhaps in a good position to move forward. It was agreed that each SACRE would have a different understanding and view of what a hub could or should be, and that no further action towards becoming a hub could be taken until the group had come to a consensus on this. It was agreed that members would send their views and those of their SACRE to Patricia Hannam, who, with the help of Derek Holloway, offered to co-ordinate these and produce a proposed way forward to the March 2014 meeting of the group. It was also agreed that the issue of a budget would need to be addressed.

Other matters listed on the agenda were discussed briefly.

It was commented that the E Bacc is not being pushed as much and that the '8' GCSEs now seem to have stronger focus, which was good for RE. The DfE now

has an RE spokesman who has been made fully aware by the RE Council about the current position regarding the numbers of RE teachers and how they are calculated. It was generally agreed that the Ofsted Report, the RE Review and the work of the APPG had led to the government beginning to realise that RE is important, and that the momentum needed to be maintained. Patricia Hannam informed the group that she had been asked to make a presentation to the APPG in January 2014 on the contribution of the Agreed Syllabus to social cohesion. There was a consensus that the findings of the Ofsted Long Report were clear and important, but that the RE Review was not as clear to follow.

6. Any Other Business

Tony Blackshaw told members that it was his last meeting and it had been a pleasure to see this group so well attended; he urged the group to continue to work to make a difference to RE in schools.

Patricia Hannam mentioned the Hampshire RE Conference for Teachers on October 17 2014, 'What do we mean by religion in RE?' and agreed to send details to members.

7. Date of next meeting

Thursday 13 March 2014 in Winchester

It was agreed that:

- **The main focus for the next meeting would be the possible role of this group as a hub**

Prior to the meeting:

- **Each SACRE would consider what they considered a hub should be**
- **Each SACRE would email Pat Hannam (pat.hannam@hants.gov.uk) their vision regarding a prospective SACRE 'Hub'**
- **Pat Hannam supported by Derek Holloway would co-ordinate and produce a proposed way forward for discussion at the next meeting**
- **Details of the Hampshire RE Conference for Teachers 2014 would be sent to members for dissemination**