

PORTSMOUTH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Wednesday 25th March 2009 at 4.30pm in the Executive Meeting Room, 3rd Floor, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Present

GROUP A REPRESENTATIVES

Peter Davies, The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches
Geoff Wheeler, Baptist Union
Sarah Coote, Deputising for David Lewis of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Marilyn Leggett, The Salvation Army
Christine McMillan, United Reformed Church
Mr Syed Aminul, Haque, Islam
Mrs Ephrat Miller-Foroughi, The Bah'a'i Faith
John Lance, South Hampshire Humanists
Ruth Guyer, Judaism
Sue Vigar-Taylor, Buddhism

GROUP B REPRESENTATIVES

Lilian Weatherley, Church of England

GROUP C REPRESENTATIVES

Gill Parmee, Junior Teacher Representative
Gemma Self, Early Years Representative
Alison Spittles, Infant Teacher Representative

GROUP D REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Malcolm Hey
Councillor David Horne (In the Chair)
Taki Jaffer, PCC Representative

CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES

Terry Carter, Retired RE Teacher/Deputy Headteacher
Sue Ganter, Interfusion
Kieran Anderson, Interfusion
Emma Eacott, Interfusion

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Georgina Mulhall, Local Authority Representative
Teresa Deasy, Democratic and Community Engagement, PCC

1 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from the following: -

Councillor David Stephen Butler, Celia Axton, The Reverend Jackie Case, Brian Hay, The Venerable Trevor Reader, Patrick Quirke, Sarah Hanley, Beverley Millsom, Alan Matthews and David Lewis, who was represented by Sarah Coote.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th November 2008

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

In minute number 31, page 22 in the second paragraph the reference to "The Portsmouth Multicultural Group" be amended to read "The Portsmouth Multicultural Link Group".

3 Matters Arising from the Minutes (AI 3)

a) Minute Number 33 - Resource Box up date

Georgina Mulhall advised that she had contacted the City Museum in connection with the request by Christine McMillan for the use of this resource to be widened to include other groups. At the last meeting Christine had explained that she had been asked to give a talk on Judaism at her Church's Girls' Brigade and had pointed out that it would have been extremely useful if she could have obtained the box on Judaism. Georgina explained that she had agreed with the City Museum staff that the resource boxes could be made available to SACRE members provided that they were not required by schools at the time.

b) Minute Number 37(a) – SACRE Constitution – Inclusion of Humanist Representative in Group A

John Lance explained that the Equality Act defined religion to include non-religious world groups such as Humanism, which held a system of values.

4 Community Cohesion Presentation by Taki Jaffer (AI 6)

Taki Jaffer gave a PowerPoint presentation. He defined social cohesion as a process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together. He suggested that the following elements were important for social cohesion to exist:

- A common vision and a sense of belonging
- The diversity of peoples' backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- Strong and positive relationships need to be established.

Taki suggested that SACRE's role in promoting social cohesion might include the following:

- Encouraging Experiential Learning
- Raising issues of Faith Deliverance to schools
- Working with wider faith bodies in the community
- The Story of Portsmouth
- Welcome Poster in languages spoken by ethnic communities resident in the Portsmouth area.

Lilian Weatherly pointed out that the Church of England Diocese were using the Diocese of Worcester's Community Cohesion document. She offered to bring a copy of this document to the next meeting.

Allison Spittles commented that schools now have to adhere to Community Cohesion Standards and she believed they were not fully aware of the requirements. Gill Parmee added that the new Ofsted framework due to be released in September would probably provide more information on this matter. Lilian Weatherly offered to work with Georgie on community cohesion in schools.

John Lance pointed out that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) had recently brought out a document entitled "Guidance Under Duty to Promote Community Cohesion".

ACTION

(1) Teresa Deasy to obtain a copy of the DCSF guidance document on Community Cohesion and distribute it to all members of SACRE.

(2) Taki Jaffer to email a copy of his presentation to Teresa Deasy for distribution to SACRE members via email.

5 Response to the Living Difference Evaluation Project (AI 4)

(TAKE IN DOCUMENT ATTACHED TO AGENDA)

SACRE members divided into four groups to discuss the four questions set out on the agenda.

The first group dealt with the following question:

What are the main issues highlighted in the report; what are the positives and are there any areas that need further development?

This group commented that the schools surveyed in the example were schools where teachers were successfully using the Living Difference syllabus. It might have been useful to include schools where teachers were having problems using the syllabus.

The comment was also made that the group could see the benefits for children of the Living Difference syllabus in teaching RE. They commented that the syllabus was aimed at improving standards. However, they pointed out that the aim to improve standards in education was primarily about literacy and numeracy and improving standards in RE was only a secondary issue to be regarded as a luxury if you have the time.

Mention was also made of the problem of skilling teachers, especially at Key Stages 1 and 2, where you don't have RE specialists in schools. Training teachers for RE was not necessarily a priority in a school improvement plan. Therefore, it was important to look at a simple way of raising the profile of RE.

It was pointed out that Georgina Mulhall carried out some training among teachers, but there are often issues in releasing teachers from their schools in order to undertake training. Georgina commented that schools often forget that the requirement to deliver RE time is a statutory requirement in the Agreed Syllabus.

The second group dealt with the question:

How can we use the report to support teachers in improving teaching and learning in RE?

This group felt that two of the main issues when teaching RE were distinguishing between content and concept. A conceptual approach was more popular and children were engaged in the subject. However, when dealing with secondary RE teaching, content becomes more important. Georgina explained that methodology was now very sophisticated and so this issue should not occur.

This group also suggested that faith communities could go into schools to speak about their faith.

The next group discussed the question:

Does the report comment upon positive RE experiences for our teachers and pupils? If YES, can you provide an example?

This group felt that the report indicated that the syllabus was successful, but it was very complicated. It required a reorientation for teachers, who would need maximum support. They were not sure how successful the sessions were which were carried out in Winchester and whether they had been shared with Portsmouth schools.

Georgina Mulhall explained that sharing of information relating to RE amongst primary schools was facilitated via the Learning Network. However, it was a point for consideration at secondary level.

The general feeling among the participants in this group was that the syllabus had got it right, but how do you sell it to schools?

The fourth group dealt with the question:

What implications does the report have for the review of the agreed syllabus?

This group felt that a response had been fed back by teachers. Therefore, there should also equally be feedback via students. They also commented that there needed to be some input from teachers who are finding it difficult to teach the syllabus and how to support them.

With regard to the need to review the agreed syllabus, Georgina Mulhall explained that the Living Difference syllabus had been launched in 2004. Legally, the syllabus had to be reviewed every 4/5 years. She had met with Clive Erricker and Judith Lowndes, RE advisors at Hampshire County Council, in September of last year with a view to discussing how to proceed with the review of the agreed syllabus. However, at the Local Networking meeting held in December, a confidential document from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) was circulated. The document stated that the 4-19 curriculum would be reviewed. The National Framework for RE would be included in the review process. Therefore, changes to the curriculum will not be known until late 2009 or early 2010.

Because the national framework was not due to be finalised until the end of the year, it had been decided to delay the agreed syllabus review process until the end of the year. Georgina suggested to the SACRE that, as the Southampton and Hampshire SACRE's had agreed to the delay, the Portsmouth SACRE should also agree.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the Portsmouth SACRE agrees with the decision by Hampshire and Southampton to wait until the review of the national framework for RE is completed before reviewing its agreed syllabus;**
- (2) the Portsmouth SACRE agrees to go ahead to review the agreed syllabus in co-operation with Hampshire and Southampton;**
- (3) with regard to the funding of the agreed syllabus review process, the Portsmouth Local Authority has agreed to pay a percentage of costs relating to publication and distribution;**
- (4) an item on the agreed syllabus would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.**

The Local Authority has also agreed to fund Georgina's time spent on the process.

Georgina Mulhall added that she hoped to have a start date for the review process by the next Local Network meeting in April.

Kieran Anderson pointed out that Humanism had only been included in a minor way in the agreed syllabus and he suggested that this issue needed to be addressed. Georgina commented that, if the SACRE agreed to this the matter could be taken up during the review process.

6 South East England Faith's Forum (SEEFF) Sub regional Conference in Newport (Isle of Wight) on Monday, 23rd March 2009

As Ephrat Miller-Foroughi, who had represented the SACRE and the Bah'a'i faith at the conference, had to leave the meeting early Taki Jaffer explained that she had agreed to email a copy of her report on the conference to Teresa Deasy for distribution via email to SACRE members.

7 Action Plan (AI 8)

(TAKE IN ACTION PLAN)

Georgina Mulhall mentioned that Sue Ganter had provided some feedback on the action plan, which she had submitted, to SACRE members for their comments. A number of items in the action plan needed to be carried out before the financial year.

Action points 1 and 2 were already happening. With regard to action number 3, this was a work in progress as a result of the Local Networking meeting held in December. She was arranging a SACRE logo competition and a member of the Local Networking group was working on designing a website.

Georgina highlighted the need for somebody from the Portsmouth SACRE to input information to the website. They would be given full support and IT skills training if necessary. Taki Jaffer suggested that Portsmouth University students could carry out this work or it could be carried out by volunteers from the Portsmouth Council of Community Service (PCCS).

ACTION

Taki Jaffer to provide details of his contacts at Portsmouth University and PCCS to Georgina Mulhall.

Georgina advised that Peter Davies was organising the production of a pamphlet. This project was also connected to the design of the logo and the website.

With regard to action 4, Georgina suggested that in addition to the Faith directory which had been produced by SACRE in the past and which currently needed to be updated, a resource directory providing more comprehensive information was also required.

ACTION

All SACRE representatives to source a volunteer from their faith group who is able to visit schools to provide information about their faith and share information about the resources available e.g. Portsmouth Cathedral School Workshops. This information needs to be sent to Georgina Mulhall.

RESOLVED that the SACRE Action Plan 2009 – 2010 be noted.

8 Interfusion (AI 9)

Sue Ganter tabled a copy of the Interfusion newsletter.

(TAKE IN INTERFUSION NEWSLETTER)

Sue explained that Interfusion was still in hibernation, as it was still looking for funding. The young people involved in the project had been unable to work on their grant applications due to the school education system, i.e. they were doing exams. Therefore, they had missed an opportunity to obtain a grant.

With regard to what was happening next, she explained that the current executive members of the group were about to go to university. At the moment the group was unable to recruit new members as, due to its current status, it was unsure of its future due to lack of funds.

The group recognised the need to consider new funding and to recruit new members. Therefore, they had launched Operation Anti Dodo with a view to recruiting new members in schools.

Sue explained that to continue in operation the group would need approximately £22,000 per year to run the operation.

The chair asked SACRE members to put out feelers with regard to obtaining finance from alternative sources.

Finally, he expressed his thanks to Sue, on behalf of the SACRE, for her excellent work with Interfusion.

9 School Visits (AI 10)

(a) Priory School

Christine McMillan reported that she had an extremely interesting visit to the year seven mixed ability learners RE Class at Priory School. The class had been learning about Native American Indians and she had been bowled over by their enthusiasm of the pupils and their teacher. The children had been involved in producing pamphlets.

(b) Somers Park Primary School

Marilyn Leggett reported that she had particularly enjoyed her visit to this school, as she had started her career in a reception class. She had observed RE teaching in reception class and had thoroughly enjoyed her visit.

(c) St Edmund's

Peter Davies reported that he had not been successful in organising a visit to St Edmund's. Taki agreed to make the necessary arrangements.

(d) Newbridge Junior School

Teresa Deasy explained that, as Ephrat Miller had to leave the meeting early, she had agreed to provide her with an email copy of her report on her visit to Newbridge Junior School. Teresa would then email a copy to all members of the SACRE.

Ruth Guyer asked if arrangements could be made for her to visit a school to observe RE teaching. Georgina Mulhall agreed to arrange this.

10 Frequency of SACRE Meetings (AI 11)

Georgina Mulhall reported that she had consulted other SACRE colleagues in other Local Authorities. In London, for example, some authorities met more than three times a year. She suggested that if the Portsmouth SACRE were to adopt this practice it might mean that meetings could be shorter and could deal with issues more immediately.

Lilian Weatherly pointed out that in the Isle of Wight and Bournemouth SACRE's they had instituted a development day for SACRE members. This option had worked very well. Georgina Mulhall agreed that this might be an interesting option. However, she anticipated that there might be a problem in releasing teachers for a whole day. However, it might be possible if SACRE were willing to pay for this.

SACRE members agreed that the idea of holding a development day was worth investigating. The matter of the cost, a venue and the cost of attendance by Teacher representatives would also need to be explored.

ACTION

Georgina Mulhall to investigate.

11 Any Other Business (AI 12)

(a) Letter from Teachers' Liaison Panel

(TAKE IN LETTER)

SACRE noted the letter from the Teachers' Liaison Panel in praise of the setting up of the RE resource boxes.

(b) Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) RE Twilight

Georgina Mulhall reported that she had held a number of RE Twilight sessions with seven faith representatives, including Taki Jaffer, Ephrat Miller and the Anglican representative of the Parish of Drayton. The sessions had been received very positively and provided an opportunity to model how teachers might use their role. All the SACRE faith groups had been represented, with the exception of the Humanists.

Taki Jaffer commented that the sessions were fast and furious, as time was so tight. A total of 27 colleagues had attended the one and three quarter hour sessions. It was commented that this was a good way for SACRE to raise its profile.

(c) The Jewish Way of Life Exhibition

Ruth Guyer reported on her suggestion made to a previous meeting of the Portsmouth SACRE regarding the possible staging of a Jewish Way of Life Exhibition in Portsmouth. She reminded SACRE members that, whilst they had shown an interest in the exhibition, it had been decided that it was not possible for the Portsmouth SACRE to get involved in the exhibition due to budgetary limitations.

She explained to members that the City of Portsmouth was linked to the City of Haifa in Israel and this link had been in existence for a number of years. She had therefore approached the City Council's Haifa-Portsmouth Friendship Link Committee to ask them whether they would be interested in sponsoring the exhibition. A representative from the Jewish Way of Life Exhibition had attended the last meeting of the Haifa-Portsmouth Friendship Link Committee to explain the work of the exhibition and to give details of costs and exhibition requirements.

The Committee had expressed an interest in staging the exhibition and were investigating costings and possible venues. The exhibition would shortly be held in Harrow and Alex Bentley, the Chair of the Haifa-Portsmouth Friendship Link Committee, had agreed to go to Harrow to look at the exhibition in order to gain some idea of the requirements. Ruth explained that it was hoped that the exhibition could be staged in Portsmouth sometime next year possibly in May or June. She suggested that the SACRE might wish to have some involvement. She agreed to update the SACRE on progress.

(d) South East of England Faiths Forum Conference

Taki Jaffer reported that this conference would be taking place on 28th April at Reading, between 4.00 pm and 7.00 pm. Taki added that he would be attending the conference, taking his car and if any SACRE member wished to attend they should get in touch with him to arrange transport. He added that he would report back on the conference at the next meeting of the SACRE

(e) Portsmouth One World Week

Sue Vigar-Taylor announced that this would be taking place shortly and agreed to email Teresa Deasy with the details for forwarding to SACRE members.

(f) Continued Youth Representation on SACRE

Sue Ganter highlighted the matter of youth representation on the SACRE in the light of the unstable future of Interfusion. She reminded SACRE members that if Interfusion is no longer able to continue as a youth interfaith group, they would have to look again at youth representation.

12 Dates of Next Meetings (AI 13)

The SACRE noted that the next meeting would not be held on a Wednesday as is usual. Instead, it will be held on Friday, 12th June at Moorings Way Infant School and would start at the earlier time of 3.00 pm. The reason for this change of day and time is to allow Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP to attend the meeting.

The November meeting of the SACRE will be held on Wednesday, 18th November at 4.00 pm. It is hoped to hold the meeting in the Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) in Margate Road, Southsea.

The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm.

TMD/cb
6 April 2009
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