

PORTSMOUTH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Wednesday 20 June 2012 at the Southsea Synagogue, The Thicket, Southsea.

Present

Group A Representatives

Peter Davies, The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (In the Chair)
Mrs Ephrat Miller, Baha'i Faith (Vice-Chair)
Ruth Guyer, Judaism
Jane Lewis, Quakers
Marilyn Leggett, The Salvation Army
Sue Vigar-Taylor, Buddhism
Mr Syed Aminul Haque, Islam
Michael Dawes, Humanism

Group B Representatives

Emily Fletcher, Church of England
Reverend Juliet Straw, Church of England

Group C Representatives

Patrick Quirke, Secondary Teacher Representative
Gemma Self, Early Years Representative
Beverley Millsom, Special School Representative
Sandra Gibb, Primary School Representative

Group D Representatives

Maria Cole, Portsmouth City Council

Co-opted Representative

Sue Ganter

Officers in Attendance

Sarah Long, Local Authority Representative
Teresa Deasy, Democratic Services

12 Southsea Synagogue

The meeting was preceded by a guided visit to the synagogue, including a talk by Mr David Clannachan on the history of the synagogue and Judaism in Portsmouth.

13 Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 1)

Michael Dawes led the moment for quiet reflection. He explained that the following day would be World Humanist Day. He referred to the Golden Rule of Humanism which states that one should treat others as one would like to be treated by others.

14 Welcome and Introductions

The chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and explained that the local authority adviser, David Picton-Jones, had left the employ of the city council since the last meeting. Sarah Long had been appointed as the new local authority representative and he welcomed her to the meeting.

15 Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Apologies for absence were received from the following: Dr Ruth Richmond, Brian Hay, the Venerable Trevor Reader, Siôn Reynolds, Paula Withers, Councillor Lynne Stagg and Councillor David Horne.

16 Minutes – 14 March 2012 (AI 4)

(TAKE IN MINUTES)

It was noted that the Reverend Juliet Straw had tendered her apologies for the last meeting but they had not been recorded.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2012 be approved as a correct record.

17 Matters Arising (AI 5)

(a) Minute No 2(a) – Apologies for Absence

The clerk advised that she had written a letter of thanks to Christine McMillan thanking her for her service as the United Reformed Church representative on the SACRE.

The clerk also reported that she had written a letter of thanks to David Picton-Jones for his service as the local authority representative to the SACRE.

(b) Minute No 5(b) – Teaching Strategies for RE at GCSE

At the last meeting Patricia Hannam of Hampshire County Council had agreed to invite Portsmouth SACRE members to attend the next Hampshire training course for SACRE members. An invitation had not yet been received.

Referring to the subject of Patricia Hannam's talk to the last SACRE meeting, Sue Ganter mentioned that Patricia had reported that the chair of the Hampshire SACRE would be circulating a letter inviting representatives from Southampton and Portsmouth to attend a joint SACRE meeting. The chair reported that a letter had been received and the matter would be followed up.

In reply to a question regarding inviting Patricia Hannam to our SACRE meetings, the chair explained that there was a cost involved and suggested it would be more appropriate to invite her to attend specific meetings when considered appropriate by the SACRE. This was agreed.

18 Teaching RE at Key Stages 3 to 5 (AI 6)

Sue Ganter reported that this project had stalled temporarily due to the departure of David Picton-Jones. Sue reported that she had discussed the matter with Sarah Long, following her appointment as the new local authority representative to the SACRE. However, it was decided that perhaps it was not a good time of the year to undertake this project and agreed that it would be more appropriate to defer it until the autumn term.

19 Student Enrichment Day on Friday 22 June at Portsmouth College (AI 7)

Sue Ganter reported that, as SACRE members had been advised via various emails and communications, the conference would be taking place on Friday 22 June at Portsmouth College. Six schools involving 150 pupils would be taking part in the day. The cost to each student would amount to only £5. Copies of the programme for the day and the evaluation forms were circulated.

Sue reported that there had been various issues involved in organising the conference including workshop facilitators having to pull out at the last minute. However, this problem had been solved with help from the funeral director of the Southern Co-op who had agreed to bring a colleague to facilitate a workshop. Sue explained that she had found it useful to involve funeral directors in RE lessons, as they were able to deal with students' questions and discussions surrounding death.

Sue mentioned that they did not have a facilitator for the first workshop of the day and asked if SACRE members wanted to volunteer their services or if they knew of anybody who might be able to help.

Sue referred to the considerable support she had received from Patrick Quirke in organising this conference. Patrick wished to put on record his thanks to Sue on behalf of the SACRE for the effort and work involved in arranging the conference. Patrick also expressed his thanks to Sarah Hanley at Portsmouth College and other staff at Portsmouth College for their support.

RESOLVED that a report on the conference be brought to the next meeting of the SACRE.

20 NASACRE Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 23 May (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jane Lewis reported that she had attended the AGM on behalf of the SACRE. She referred to her report circulated with the agenda and drew SACRE members' attention to some of the points mentioned. She highlighted a point made by Professor Jackson that some children, especially those brought up as atheists, felt vulnerable during RE lessons. She commented that this was something that she had never thought of but could understand why some children might feel vulnerable with regard to their religion or to not having a religion.

Michael Dawes commented that students feeling vulnerable in RE classes would depend on the teaching of RE in the school. The current advice to teachers is not to imply that a person without a religion is without morals

Mr Lat Blaylock was a particularly good speaker. He made the point that teachers who are keen on RE tended to teach it well. The issue for SACRE is how does it reach teachers who are not keen on RE.

Jane reported that the last speaker made a number of points regarding the English Baccalaureate and the fact that RE is excluded from the list of subjects. It is believed that this would lead to a reduction of pupils taking RE at GCSE. Furthermore in the review of the national curriculum the subject of RE was omitted.

Patrick Quirke reported that he had been involved in meetings with the Welsh Universities Education Examination Board and commenting that many Portsmouth students took GCSEs provided by this examination board. At the meeting participants were informed that 185,000 were taking RE at GCSE this year. There was evidence that there would be no impact of the introduction of the English Baccalaureate where RE was being effectively taught in schools. However, where RE is not being taught well a drop off is predicted.

Patrick reported generally on RE at secondary level in Portsmouth. At Mayfield School the Head of RE would be leaving in August but a newly qualified teacher would be undertaking the role and would be receiving support from other RE heads. A Head of RE was in post at the Charter Academy and Springfield School had just employed a new Head of RE. The situation at other schools in the city remained the same.

Patrick further commented that the fact that RE was omitted from the national curriculum was not relevant. In Portsmouth, Southampton and Hampshire the agreed syllabus was in place and was reviewed regularly. Therefore, he believed that it was not important for RE to be part of a curriculum review.

With regard to the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC), it was reported that the new Ofsted guidelines would be implemented in September.

21 NASACRE Newsletter (AI 9)

(TAKE IN NEWSLETTER)

RESOLVED that the NASACRE newsletter be noted by the SACRE.

22 Offer to Support Teaching on Sikhism in Portsmouth Schools (AI 10)

(TAKE IN EMAIL COMMUNICATION)

The clerk reported that she had been in touch with the author of the email, Mr Chadha, regarding teaching Sikhism and Sikh representation on the SACRE. Mr Chadha was keen to make contact with Portsmouth schools to offer support on the teaching of the Sikh faith in schools. However, he had not expressed an interest in becoming involved in the SACRE.

Beverley Millsom reported that she had received the email from the clerk and had consequently invited Mr Chadha to attend a twilight session. Unfortunately, he had not been able to attend.

The teachers present at this meeting noted that the email addresses for some headteachers were incorrect and therefore they had not received the information.

ACTION

The clerk to resend the email to all schools.

23 Offer to Support Teaching on Hinduism in Portsmouth Schools (AI 11)

(TAKE IN EMAIL COMMUNICATION)

The clerk reported that she had been in touch with Mr Steve Hopkins, the author of the email. Mr Hopkins had expressed a keen interest in supporting teaching on Hinduism in Portsmouth but as his base was remote from Portsmouth, it was thought that better value for money could probably be achieved elsewhere.

24 Local Reports (AI 12)

a) Invitation to Visit the Isle of Wight SACRE

The chair reported that he and Sarah Long had been invited on a reciprocal visit to the Isle of Wight SACRE. Members will recall that the chair and clerk of the Isle of Wight SACRE had attended the last meeting of this SACRE as a networking exercise. The meeting was held in at the primary school in Arreton.

Lillian Weatherly, who had in the past been a Church of England representative on this SACRE, reported on a number of matters. The Isle of Wight SACRE meetings are managed with considerable input from the clerk. The membership of the SACRE is very different from the Portsmouth SACRE in that the majority of groups represented were largely Christian with the exception of one Jewish member.

The Isle of Wight SACRE members were in the process of organising a school visit programme and were therefore very interested in our guidelines relating to school visits.

Patrick Quirke referred to discussions at previous meetings for SACRE members to have training prior to school visits. He reminded members that David Picton-Jones had produced a draft document on a school visit protocol. The clerk undertook to retrieve this document.

Patrick also reminded SACRE members that there was an assessment element of SACRE visits to schools and this was why the training would be required.

Members agreed that a new protocol for school visits would be necessary. Therefore it was agreed that a working party be set up to consider the matter.

RESOLVED (1) that the following SACRE members be appointed to a working party to formulate a SACRE protocol for school visits: Michael Dawes, Patrick Quirke, Sue Ganter, Beverley Millsom, Sandra Gibb, Peter Davies, and Sarah Long;

(2) that a report be brought back to the next meeting of the SACRE.

b) School Visits

There were no school visits to report.

c) RE Twilights

Beverley Millsom reported that the meeting held on 23 May had not been as popular as previous meetings. Sarah Long had attended (**her first meeting**) in her capacity as the new local authority representative to the SACRE.

Beverley also reported that Patricia Hannam would be invited to attend the secondary school meeting. However, the October meeting would be a more general meeting primarily for primary schools. She asked whether the SACRE would be willing to fund an invitation to Judith Lowndes to attend the primary school meeting in October.

RESOLVED that funding be provided for fund a visit by Judith Lowndes to the October Twilights meeting.

Beverley also mentioned that she had occasion recently to use the SACRE directory of faiths and had found that the information had very quickly become out of date. Members then went on to discuss how improvements could be made to this directory and whether it should only be produced electronically and put on a SACRE website so that it could be easily updated. Michael Dawes stated that he had looked at various SACRE websites. Although they varied in quality, some local authority SACREs had high quality interactive websites. This might be something that the SACRE might like to consider.

Sarah Long suggested that the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, which she manages, already has a website. Therefore, it would be quite easy for the SACRE information to be part of this website. SACRE members agreed that the future of the SACRE directory and the idea of a SACRE website should be considered.

RESOLVED that a working party be set up to look into the possibility of developing a website to include the SACRE directory. The working party to be composed of the following: Beverley Millsom, Patrick Quirke, Gemma Self, Michael Dawes and Sarah Long.

d) RE Boxes

Sue Vigar-Taylor reported that the usage of the RE boxes was declining. She suggested that it would be useful to have faith representatives willing to attend schools to present the information contained in the boxes.

It was suggested that one way to give some publicity to the availability of the boxes would be to have the information on the proposed website.

Sarah Long reported that she had a list of the items available and she and her staff were attempting to catalogue it. She suggested that a way to publicise the availability of the RE boxes would be to have an exhibition of them altogether at the EMAS centre and to invite all primary and secondary schools to visit.

25 Any Other Business (AI 13)

There was no other business.

26 Date of Next Meeting (AI 14)

The next meeting of the Portsmouth SACRE will be held on Wednesday 14 November 2012 at 4.30 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, floor 3 in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

The meeting concluded at 6.15 pm.

TMD/DMF
21 June 2012
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