

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

NETWORK MEETING OF LOCAL SACREs

NOTES OF THE MEETING held on Friday 5 October at 10.00 am in the Mitchell Room, The Castle, Winchester

Present:

Bournemouth

Lynda Ford-Horne (Vice-chairman)

Rubina Nassar (support officer)

Hampshire

Councillor Anna McNair Scott (Chairman) - in the Chair

Councillor Roz Chadd (Vice-chairman)

Patricia Hannam (support officer)

Sue Butler (clerk)

Isle of Wight

David Cave (Chairman)

Ralph Hodd (SACRE member)

Harry Kirby (clerk)

Poole

Derek Holloway (Chairman)

Portsmouth

Peter Davies (Chairman)

Southampton

Councillor Edward Daunt (Chairman)

West Sussex

Derek James (Chairman)

Nigel Bloodworth (support officer)

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Judith Lowndes (Hampshire), Stephen Chappell (Bournemouth) and Ephrat Miller (Portsmouth).

Councillor Anna McNair Scott welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. She noted that the last joint meeting had been held in July 2010.

1. Updates from each local authority's SACRE

Each local representative gave a short report on their SACRE and its work.

Hampshire

Patricia Hannam informed the group that RE remained strong in Hampshire, largely due to local authority commitment to Religious Education specifically and whole school improvement in general. Training courses and network groups continue to be run. The Agreed Syllabus (Living Difference Revised 2011) was popular and had been sold to the London Borough of Camden. The introduction of the English Baccalaureate had not had the expected impact on

the uptake of GCSE RE so far, although there had been a slight decline in the numbers taking the short course. Numbers for Full Course GCSE continue to be high; following a peak of over 3.800 entries in 2011 there was a moderate decline of 200 in the 2012 entries. She explained that SACRE's monitoring subgroup had a remit to look at GCSE results as well as Ofsted/SIAS reports. They also make informal visits to schools to monitor RE provision and report back to SACRE. The subgroup has members from each of the 4 SACRE groups and the local authority has allocated funding for 5 days each for primary and secondary schools' monitoring visits to the RE inspectors/advisors. Good relations were maintained with the Dioceses of Portsmouth and Winchester and Judith Lowndes was facilitating network groups for the diocese in several locations. The RE Centre continues to be well supported. Half of Hampshire secondary schools are now academies, but very few primary schools.

Isle of Wight

It was explained that the position of RE on the Isle of Wight was a contrast to that in Hampshire as the local authority had no officer responsible for RE; however, following a schools' reorganisation, there had been an improvement in the connection between the local authority and SACRE. They have a small budget and provide courses for teachers and have sold their Agreed Syllabus to East Sussex.

Poole

Poole works closely with Bournemouth SACRE and have a joint Agreed Syllabus, which was revised last year; their £4,000 budget for this year and next has been spent on developing and publishing this. The group were informed that Poole Borough has 3 support officers for RE, not full time, and that most secondary schools had become academies. SACRE's focus was on supporting and resourcing teachers, not on monitoring.

Bournemouth

The group were informed that SACRE had no budget and that instead of monitoring visits they invite schools to make a presentation to SACRE about RE in their schools. They reported an increase in the number of students taking full course GCSE. The RE library and resources have had to be split between schools as the building it was housed in was withdrawn. They have introduced a memory stick of resources for schools which has proved a very practical way to distribute information and has been very successful. The group were made aware of a primary school resource called 'Discovery' by Jan Lever, who developed their Agreed Syllabus. Bournemouth Council currently allocates one day a week of officer time to RE, but there will be a reorganisation in 2013 which could affect this. Most of the Borough's secondary schools have become academies, with 1 primary and others following; at the present time they seem to be continuing to follow the Agreed Syllabus. An academy representative sits on SACRE.

Portsmouth

Peter Davies expressed the view that he felt that joint SACRE meetings were important. As Portsmouth's Chairman he was keen that SACRE would not just be a talking shop. They have support and a budget of £6,500 from the local authority. In the current year some of this has been spent on a very successful 'student enrichment conference' with input from various faith groups. He felt that they were good at supporting their primary schools, and

work was underway to improve liaison with secondary schools; a co-opted member had been employed to endeavour to visit each secondary school, prepare a report on them for SACRE and to offer support and training for SACRE members for them to feel able to visit schools. RE resource boxes were available for hire and were mainly used by primary schools. It was commented that Portsmouth SACRE had invited Isle of Wight and Southampton members to meetings which had proved very useful.

Southampton

Councillor Daunt expressed the view that he had been unsure of the value of networking, but now felt that it was important. He reported that Southampton SACRE had a limited budget and that academies were a concern for them. He felt that it was important in SACRE visits to schools to look not only at religion, but also social cohesion.

West Sussex

Derek James told the group that West Sussex was unsure whether to look east or west for networking, but felt it was important not to be in isolation. He informed the group that the County Council has no subject advisers and does not offer any training for teachers, this was done through an external group, with whom SACRE has some links. SACRE does not have a budget but is allowed to spend. He felt that SACRE's support to schools was not good, although they have published some resources and have subgroups which meet when necessary. Despite this RE was doing well and numbers and standards had improved over the last few years. SACRE was working well with primary schools and had good relations with the Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses. Their Agreed Syllabus was due to be revised in 2013.

2. Protocol and purpose of joint meetings

There was discussion about the current Protocol and Terms of Reference and a number of changes were agreed:

Section 1 - Poole and West Sussex were added

Section 2 – the following words were added – ‘If representatives of the local SACREs are unable to attend joint SACRE meetings they will attempt to send an alternative representative.’

Section 3 - wording related to Living Difference was replaced with ‘all Agreed Syllabi within the group’

Section 4 – removed as it was a duplication

Section 5 - the following words were added – ‘Bournemouth, Isle of Wight and West Sussex offered to host on occasions, however travelling time and distance may preclude this on a regular basis.’

3. NASACRE engagement and support

The group discussed the importance of NASACRE and the need to support it since this was a time of great change for RE and its place in the curriculum.

It was agreed that a member of NASACRE should be invited to speak to the joint group at a future meeting.

4. New national initiatives:

- **Proposals for the new Primary curriculum**

- **Impact of English Baccalaureate in Secondary Schools on the role and responsibilities of SACREs**
- **RE Review by RE Council**

Patricia Hannam informed the group that under current proposals in the Primary curriculum review, the one that could have the most critical impact on our Agreed Syllabi was the prospect of the removal of levels. It was commented that RE has a unique place in the curriculum, being not a 'national' subject, but locally determined. The local distinctiveness of each Syllabus could make calibrating assessment and progression across our different syllabi more complex. It was thought unlikely that the government would implement a move to one national syllabus for RE. There was discussion about how RE would be monitored across the Key Stages, whether RE should be treated in similar way to History and Geography, and whether tests were the right vehicle for plotting children's progress in RE. It was suggested that if RE was not tested, then it could lose its credibility as a subject.

The introduction of the English Baccalaureate had not had an impact on numbers taking GCSE RE yet in any of the areas represented. It was reported that the campaign to have RE included in it would continue. It was favourably noted that the RE Council had allocated 30 days for a consultant to support the work of the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE.

Members were informed that the government had removed the bursary given to students training to teach RE. Derek Holloway drew members' attention to a small bursary that was available to trainee RE teachers from within the Salisbury Diocese from Sarum St Michael Educational Charity – <http://www.sarumstmichael.org/> .

Members were provided with a copy of the Phase One (Preliminary) timetable of the RE Subject Review and were informed that a first draft report was now expected by early January 2013.

5. Academies and the impact of their status on the role and responsibilities of SACREs

There were general concerns about how SACREs could relate to academies and what these schools would do with RE, as there was no right for local authorities or SACRE to monitor their RE. Patricia Hannam informed the group that within Hampshire slightly more than half of secondary schools, 2 primaries and 1 special school were now academies and that where relationships with the teachers in these schools had been good before the change, this had continued. She also explained that the GCSE results in the academies was being monitored, although nothing could be done locally if there were concerns. Discussions focussed on how SACREs could interact with academies and free schools. Since they were all individual schools, it was not possible for a co-opted member to represent them as group. Derek Holloway informed the group that Poole SACRE have academy representatives, but they had been members prior to their schools changing to academies; Poole also have a public school representative and are looking to co-opt a free school representative. Hampshire were also looking to co-opt an academy representative. It was agreed that, despite the fact that local

authorities have no duty to monitor RE in academies, all children are still the responsibility of the local authority and therefore it should be monitored in some way. Furthermore, it was agreed that SACREs could be an important monitoring vehicle if close links can be maintained or developed.

6. Any Other Business

Harry Kirby asked whether anyone had experience in running or ideas for a day conference with speakers as they have a demand on the Island for the development of expertise in a range of faiths. Councillor Daunt offered to come to the Island to help and suggested the Southampton Council of Faiths; Patricia Hannam and Lynda Ford-Horne offered contacts for speakers and visits.

Lynda Ford Horne promoted the teaching resources on the Holocaust Memorial Trust website, indicating that the theme this year was 'Building Bridges'.

The group were informed about the annual South West SACRE Conference on 14 March 2013 and that it would be a good training event for SACRE members.

It was suggested and agreed that the joint group should consider organising their own 'Central South' Conference; Patricia Hannam and Derek Holloway offered to do some work on this for the next meeting.

Patricia Hannam promoted a booklet produced by Hampshire entitled 'Hampshire School Self-evaluation tool for the promotion of SMSC Development' and referred to the successful course that was being run in Hampshire together with the Hampshire PDL Inspector/Adviser. Although SMSC is not exclusively an RE concern and is not RE, these courses were proving a useful opportunity to ensure senior teachers understood their obligations to teach RE.

The date of the next meeting was set as **Monday 11 March 2013 at 10.00am**. It was agreed that Hampshire would host the meeting .