

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held on Wednesday, 1 November 2023 at 4.30 pm Mayfield School, Mayfield Road, Portsmouth PO2 0RH.

Present

Group A Representatives - One representative of each of the religions and other bodies listed in the SACRE constitution

Baptist - Geoff Wheeler
Evangelical Church - Pastor Chris Thomas
Humanist - Barbara Spiegelhalter
Jewish – Michael Zeffertt
Quaker - Sarah Coote
United Reformed Church - Christine McMillan

Group B Representatives - Church of England

Revd Sam Duddles (Chair)
Jane Kelly

Group C Representatives - Six teachers representing the various key stages and an association recognised by the Authority for the purposes of consultation and negotiation

Beth Smith - Secondary School Representative

Group D Representatives - Four representatives of the Authority, at least two of whom shall be elected members of the Authority

Councillor Abdul Kadir

Also in attendance:

Justine Ball, Professional Advisor
Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE
Karen Martin, Local Democracy Officer, SACRE Clerk

24. Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)

Justine Ball, Professional Advisor, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

25. Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Apologies had been received from Elizabeth Jenkerson (Group A), Revd Ray Goddess (Group A), Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dattoo (Group A), Sue Bowen (Group B), Kari Laing (Group C), Fiona Kelly (Group C), Rachael Osborne (Group C), Councillor Asghar Shah (Group D), Councillor Benedict Swann (Group D), Taki Jaffer (Group D) and Jessi Wilson, CoPS (Co-opted member).

Cllr Kadir apologised he would have to leave at 5.30pm.

26. Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 3)

The moment for quiet reflection was taken by Priv Mudada RE teacher and second year ECT. She asked those present to reflect and be grateful for good things large and small over the past incredible year. She gave thanks for the unique opportunity to teach and respond to experiences and she noted that gratitude and thankfulness is reflected in all great religious traditions.

The Revd Sam Duddles, SACRE Chair, thanked Priv Mudada for her thought provoking words.

The short reflection was followed by a presentation by Sharon Rich, the Head of RE at Mayfield School.

The Revd Sam Duddles, SACRE Chair, thanked Sharon Rich for her presentation. Justine Ball thanked Portsmouth and the Head of School of Improvement for their support in enabling Chris May, Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE, to spend time with the school developing the RE curriculum.

27. Declaration of Members' Interest (AI 4)

There were none.

28. Election of Chair of SACRE (AI 5)

A valid proposal nominating Revd. Sam Duddles had been received from Councillor Benedict Swann (Group D) and seconded by Michael Zeffert (Group A). As this was the only valid nomination, no vote was required, and Revd. Sam Duddles was duly elected Chair of the Portsmouth SACRE for a further two year term.

Pastor Chris Thomas (Group A) proposed thanks to Revd. Sam Duddles for her chairmanship to date and this was endorsed by the SACRE.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Elect Revd. Sam Duddles (Group B) as Chair of the Portsmouth for a two year term SACRE with immediate effect.**
- b) Thank Revd. Sam Duddles for her Chairmanship over the past two years.**

29. Minutes of the Previous meeting held on 14 June 2023 (AI 6)

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 as an accurate record.

30. Matters Arising from the minutes (AI 7)

The following items from the previous minutes were raised:

Minute 20 Monitoring Group Report - Mosque visits for teachers and Ramadan advice Councillor Kadir (Group D) confirmed that Mr Ali of the Muslim Academy in Buckland is happy to set up a meeting to discuss the welfare of Muslim students during Ramadan. It was agreed this would take place on a Monday or Wednesday and Councillor Kadir will arrange a date with Revd. Sam Duddles.

Minute 20 MG Report - Teacher training and recruitment - Following a question from Michael Zeffert (Group A), Chris May informed the SACRE that there are a mix of specialist and non-specialist teachers teaching RE in Portsmouth and that recruitment and retention is not an active concern currently. Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement agreed, noting that the city has 14 MATS and currently two LA maintained schools - Mayfield School and St Edmund's Catholic School. Justine Ball, SACRE Advisor commented that the recently announced bursary should encourage more teachers to join the profession. She added that the SACRE would continue to monitor the situation and Revd. Sam Duddles added that this matter is discussed at the confidential Monitoring Group meeting.

Actions:

- i. Meeting to take place at Muslim Academy to discuss the welfare of students in Ramadan - Councillors Kadir and Shah (Group D) and Revd. Sam Duddles, SACRE Chair.*

31. SACRE Code of Conduct 2023-24 (AI 8)

Justine Ball, Professional Advisor, introduced the item, reminding the SACRE that it was first adopted on 28 March 2023 and that its presence on the agenda was an opportunity for all members to review and agree to standards of professional conduct for example in relation to school visits. She added that this is an annual item. She took the opportunity to remind SACRE members that RE Hubs provides visitors to schools to undertake training for accreditation which is useful.

RESOLVED that SACRE endorses the Code of Conduct and the principles it espouses for the next 12 months and that it is considered again at the first SACRE meeting of the 2024-25 academic year.

32. SACRE Annual Report 2022-23 (AI 9)

Justine Ball, Professional Advisor introduced the SACRE Annual Report 2022-23. She explained that it is a chance for the SACRE to review the report which all SACRE's are required to produce. She confirmed that the report

followed the new NASACRE template which allows the national organisation to compare information.

Justine Ball explained that highlights from the past year, set out in the Annual report, included:

- Advice to schools which is a strength of the Portsmouth SACRE.
- The SACRE Monitoring Group which provides an opportunity to monitor RE delivery in schools and Collective Worship.
- The Directory of Places of Worship which is now on the National RE Hubs website.
- The Review of school websites which the SACRE undertook last year and which was a useful exercise.
- The annual review on withdrawals from RE and Collective Worship which will be repeated this year.
- Primary network meetings which are useful.
- The grant obtained and which enabled a session for teachers to attend a CPD event about Christianity and Diversity.

During discussion, Pastor Chris Thomas (Group A) enquired about whether pupils studying RE at GCSE were generally from a faith or non-faith background. Beth Smith, RE teacher at Mayfield School and Group C member, informed the SACRE that although she could not speak for schools in Portsmouth generally, at Mayfield they are generally non-religious with a very small minority coming from a faith background.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Adopt the SACRE Annual Report 2022-23.**
- b) Recommend that the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education notes the SACRE Annual Report 2022-23 by 31 December 2023.**
- c) Make a copy available for public inspection (on the Portsmouth City Council website) and sends a copy to the Secretary of State for Education and relevant organisations including NASACRE.**

The Clerk confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education would receive a copy of the SACRE Annual Report for noting at her meeting on 14 December 2023.

33. SACRE Membership and Member Training report (AI 10)

Justine Ball, Professional Advisor introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda.

Regarding vacancies, it was noted that there are vacancies in Group A for representatives from Portsmouth Catholic Diocesan Office, Buddhist, Hindu, Salvation Army, Islam and other Christian denominations (1 each); Group B has one CofE vacancy; Group C has a vacancy for an Early Years

representative and there were no current vacancies in Group D. The SACRE has been carrying these vacancies for some time.

It was noted that the appendix which set out the training opportunities from NASACRE had been appended to the item relating to the Annual Report (at pages 35-36 of the agenda pack). NASACRE training is really helpful and has Collective worship training on 20 November.

Actions:

- i. Regarding the vacancy for a church of England representative (Group B) an approach to the Dioceses will be made - Jane Kelly (Group B)***

RESOLVED that the SACRE:

- a) Appointed Mr Michael Zeffert, as Jewish representative (Group A) following the resignation of Samuel Hilsenrath which was noted at the last meeting.**
- b) Noted the membership vacancies set out in paragraph 4 of this report and asks the Local Authority to approach relevant appointing bodies for representatives.**
- c) Noted that the SACRE has subscribed to NASACRE for the current academic year, that this allows members to attend its training sessions (set out in Appendix A to this report) free of charge and that members should take advantage of opportunity.**

34. SACRE Monitoring Group Report (AI 11)

Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE and Justine Ball, SACRE Professional Advisor, introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda.

Updates on 2023 GCSE Religious Studies examinations and known results

Chris May explained that Portsmouth specific data is not yet available but there is some information available for the Hampshire geographical area. Although GCSE entries nationally are up slightly, in Hampshire the number of entries has shown a slight downward trend for RE. An area of concern is that Hampshire is towards the bottom of the list of counties for uptake at GCSE and A Level. However, on outcomes, Hampshire is doing much better and is slightly above national average at GCSE. The problem therefore is declining number of entries, and this links back to the shortage of specialist RE teachers. More specific data will be available for the next cycle of SACRE meetings in the Spring term.

Other matters considered by the Monitoring Group

Justine Ball informed the SACRE that:

- The SACRE and Monitoring Group are always looking to support teachers' CPD and sources of evidence of effectiveness of RE.
- Living Difference IV is now halfway through its lifecycle and she and Chris May will be starting work reviewing the syllabus with a focus on the golden threads and pondering time.
- There have not been many Ofsted reports which mention RE, and it is therefore hard to pull out themes. However, where RE is mentioned, the comments are positive.
- Anecdotally, there have been reports that the number of withdrawals from RE and Collective Worship have increased and the survey to track this will therefore be undertaken once again just after Christmas.

In discussion there were several questions, and the following information was provided:

- With fewer mainstream schools offering RE at GCSE and therefore, fewer entering, those who do sit exams are more likely to do better than a bigger cohort. However, students are expected to perform as well in RE as they do for other subjects, while a previous history of less curriculum time on the subject can result in some pupils being less confident.
- There is no information yet in the data on the difference in uptake or outcomes between genders. However, it was reported that at Mayfield School there is a 50:50 split between the genders studying RE in Year 10 in 2023/24.
- Pondering time is delivered very well by special schools and in most secondary schools. Primary schools need additional support in developing opportunities for pondering time and this is being addressed through the Primary Network alongside the development of resources and guidance how to deliver pondering time.

Revd. Sam Duddles, Chair SACRE, thanked Justine Ball and Chris May for all they are doing to support schools in Portsmouth.

The SACRE RESOLVED to note the findings of the Monitoring Group meeting.

35. Annual Review of the SACRE Constitution (AI 12)

Justine Ball, SACRE Professional Advisor, informed the SACRE that its Constitution was agreed and was last reviewed in 2019 and that it was good practice to review it regularly. A copy of the current Constitution was included with the papers for the meeting. Justine Ball noted that the SACRE could either agree to confirm it (with the minor typing error correction) or take the opportunity of reviewing it particularly in relation to the membership of Groups B and C including considering Census or pupil data in relation to Group A.

Pastor Chris Thomas (Group A) agreed that the areas for possible review as set out in the covering report seemed sensible. It was proposed that the SACRE membership be approached about creating small working groups to address each area and that these smaller group meetings could be held on Teams.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- a) Invited SACRE members to participate in small working group meetings on Teams to consider the membership for each Group (Group A members to consider Group A membership; Group B to review Group B membership etc).
- b) Invited each working group to make recommendations to the SACRE about whether they would like to make amendments to the membership for their Group.
- c) Noted that any amendments to the SACRE constitution will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education.
- d) Confirmed the SACRE Constitution (previously agreed on 20 November 2019) subject to the words "stated in 4.1" in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 should be changed to read "stated in 3.1".

It was noted that if it is not possible to find volunteers from each Group to review the membership of each Group, the SACRE constitution will be brought back for review in the Autumn term of 2024.

Please also see minute 38 below regarding the involvement of young people in a Youth SACRE.

36. Annual Review of SACRE Allowances Policy and Procedures (AI 13)

Justine Ball, SACRE Professional Advisor, reminded the SACRE that many members are volunteers and that attracting new members to join the council could be encouraged if the opportunity to claim legitimate expenses incurred on SACRE business was made available.

RESOLVED that SACRE adopts the SACRE Allowances Policy and Procedures for the next 12 months and that it is further reviewed at the first SACRE meeting of the 2024-25 academic year.

37. SACRE National and Local RE Matters report (AI 14)

Chris May, Secondary RE Teaching and Learning Advisor, introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda. He noted the following highlights set out in the report:

- At the last SACRE meeting, the picture for encouraging new RE teachers into the profession looked bleak. Now, following a campaign by a number of organisations including NATRE, a Bursary has been announced, an open letter to the Secretary for Education has been published and a select committee has met to discuss recruitment and retention of RE teachers. It was confirmed that the Bursary is £10,000.

- Culham St Gabriel's Trust continues to offer several initiatives including its leadership programme and C-teach and that these comprise high quality opportunities for RE teachers to develop.
- The RE Hubs project is growing and provides useful information in the local area. There is a link to RE Hubs in the report.
- Other useful resources (set out in the report) include the British library and the Jewish Museum in London
- GCSE results taken from NATRE - links there if want more detail on data currently available.

RESOLVED: To note the report.

38. Brief updates or notification of items to be brought to a future meeting (AI 15)

It was noted that SACRE meeting dates for the 2024/25 academic year will be proposed at the next meeting. In subsequent discussion, it was noted that the current meeting date in the Autumn term does not allow for involvement by the Council for Portsmouth Students (CoPS) as they do not elect their SACRE representative until late November. It was agreed however, that it was not possible to move the date of the SACRE meeting to early December. Revd Sam Duddles agreed to meet with CoPS in early January 2024 and it was noted that there is an ambition to develop a Youth SACRE in Portsmouth. Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement commented that pupils beyond CoPS could be interested in a Youth SACRE. Justine Ball suggested that the involvement of young people should be included in the review of the constitution (see minute 35 above).

Actions:

- i. Meeting with CoPS to take place in early January 2024 to discuss involvement in SACRE in medium to long term, including the potential for a Youth SACRE in Portsmouth - Revd Sam Duddles.***

39. Date of next meeting (AI 16)

It was confirmed that the next meeting will take place at **4.30pm on Wednesday 20 March 2024.**

In discussion about the venue for the next meeting, Michael Zeffert (Group A) suggested that neutral venues were preferable. During discussion other members of the SACRE felt that it was important for members to visit different places of worship and experience alternative perspectives. Barbara Spiegelhalter (Group A) also noted that humanists do not have a place of worship. Jane Kelly (Group B) commented that the SACRE also visits schools and has held meetings at Portsmouth Guildhall in the past. Revd. Sam Duddles commented that the SACRE actively encouraged schools to visit places of religion and she felt that it was best practice for the SACRE membership to be open to such visits.

Actions:

- i. SACRE members be invited to contribute their views about places of worship as venue for SACRE meetings - SACRE Clerk.***

Christine McMillian (Group A) noted that 12-19 November is Interfaith Week and that the SACRE had not discussed it. Revd Sam Duddles noted that as Chair one of her roles is to be the public face of the Portsmouth SACRE, representing it at public events, including interfaith events, and being a champion for religious education and collective worship in the local authority and its schools. She explained that there have been attempts to bring together faith representatives from across the city, but these had not been successful.

RESOLVED to discuss Interfaith Week 2024 and future plans at the next meeting.

Christine McMillan had brought along some leaflets a leaflet of interfaith prayers and reflections in celebration of the Week of Prayer for World Peace (15-22 October 2023) and invited members to take a copy.

The meeting concluded at 6.18 pm.

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Chair of SACRE