

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, 14 November 2018 at 4.30 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Ryan Brent (in the Chair)
Councillor Suzy Horton (Vice Chair) plus

Group A - Elizabeth Jenkerson
Ruth Guyer, Peter Davies, Geoff Wheeler
Syed Aminul Haque, John Mills & Sarah Coote
Group B - Rev. Jane Ball
Jane Kelly & Rev. Sam Duddles
Group C - Sarah Sadler, Aasha Small & Kari Laing
Group D Maria Cole & Taki Jaffer

Mike Stoneman PCC, Patricia Hannam Professional
Adviser & Joanne Wildsmith PCC

Apologies for Absence

Tom Blair, Teresa Everett, Christine McMillan and Sandra Gibb

1. Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)

Councillor Ryan Brent as Chair welcomed everyone and thanked Sarah Sadler, Headteacher at Highbury Primary School, for her hospitality and for the tour of the school given prior to the meeting. He also thanked Sue Taylor, the teacher with responsibility for RE at Highbury Primary, for her very interesting presentation to members prior to the meeting. Sue's presentation had been regarding her research as a Farmington Scholar¹, entitled "British Values - No Problem!" based on her surveys and interviews with pupils and parents at the school (where there were 4 main religions, and many saying they had no religion) and the development of a British Values day and creation of displays by the children. The results of her project had shown a better understanding, empathy and tolerance by the participants in her research, and British Values had been added to their RE plans.

2. Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Sandra Gibb, Teresa Everitt, Helen Reeder, Tom Blair and Christine McMillan.

3. Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 3)

¹ <http://www.farmington.ac.uk/index.php/farmington-scholarships/>

Jane Kelly, Church of England representative, led the moment for quiet reflection asking everyone to consider how good we are at listening to young people and answering the questions they raise. Jane referred to an article that explored a child's question to God "How did you get invented?" and the reply given by the then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

4. Declaration of Members' Interest (AI 4)

Elizabeth Jenkerson made her standard declaration that she is on the West Hill Panel that judges grants for SACREs.

5. Minutes of the Previous meeting held on 27 June 2018 (AI 5)

The list of those present on 27 June 2018 should refer to Syed **Aminul** Haque.

RESOLVED that the minutes of 27 June 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

6. Matters Arising from the minutes of 27 June 2018 (AI 6)

There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

7. Membership Update (AI 7)

The Portsmouth SACRE welcomed new members Aasha Small (from Medina School) and John Mills who was filling the vacancy for the Methodist Church.

8. Brief updates or notification of items to be brought to a future meeting (AI 8)

It was suggested that the ramifications of the report of the Commission on RE be made a standing agenda item, which was discussed further under agenda item 12 relating to this topic.

9. Monitoring Group Report (AI 9)

Patricia Hannam, as Professional Adviser, presented her report summarising the discussions of the sub group which had been held on 8 October 2018. The next meeting of the monitoring group would be able to look at the GCSE and A Level results in more detail. The inspection reports considered by the group had not raised concerns. There was however continued concern at the dramatic reduction in the numbers of pupils taking RE at GCSE which also raised the issue of what provision there was to access the statutory requirements for RE. Mike Stoneman would follow this up with the Secondary Headteachers, only 2 of whom had responded to Patricia's request for information.

10. Constitution revision (AI 10)

Patricia Hannam and Joanne Wildsmith had been liaising with PCC's Head of Legal Services for legal advice on the proposed amendments, which sought to simply and update the SACRE constitution.

Discussion took place as to how new members were authorised as representatives of their religious groups or other bodies. The authority to appoint was by the SACRE not by PCC but how the individuals were selected was questioned. Members felt comfortable that the existing practice of members of SACRE bringing along their proposed successors but where they are totally new there may be issues of concern, such as safeguarding (for when members visited schools, although they should be accompanied). It was therefore asked what were "reasonable steps" in SACRE making the appointments of suitable representatives? Some SACREs used sub groups to look at more unusual membership issues, such as requests to join from the Church of the Latter Day Saints (who are an established religion).

The role of a membership sub group would need further legal input, to look at requests received from outside the approved faiths for national SACREs (or the Interfaith Network) with the Portsmouth SACRE to continue to reflect the principal faiths of the area. A sub group would need to report back to the main SACRE.

The Chair suggested that Point 6 be clarified further and it be asked that organisations tie in with the safeguarding measures and processes. Rather than not approve the rest of the updated constitution, members were mindful to accept the other changes with further work to take place on the membership issues discussed.

It was therefore AGREED that the revised Constitution be approved, but with further work to take place (with legal input) regarding point 6 on the appointment of members and a report be brought back to clarify arrangements.

11. Update regarding the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus (AI 11)

Patricia Hannam gave a short verbal report; this was progressing well and Justine Ball was meeting with 16/17 schools.

12. Final report of the Commission on RE (AI 12)

Members had access to the summary report on the two years of work, during which there had been many changes and volatility in schools, including the *academisation* of more schools. The final independent report had been published in September 2018, and there had been over 3000 submissions. The key findings had included:

- Religious Education in schools needs rejuvenating, with more diversity being encountered by pupils
- There is a variability in the quality of RE teaching nationally

One of the biggest changes is the subject name changing to "Religion and World Views". Revd John Hall, the Chair of the Commission, had stated that currently Christianity had a key place which may change in its prominence. Another intention was to bring more lived experience into the classroom and there would be an extension beyond the 6 main religions in the future.

Locally members of SACRE were concerned that RE is disappearing in some secondary schools.

When considering the Commission's proposals the areas of most concern were the change in name, the establishment of national entitlement and the change in the role of SACRE bodies. It was therefore suggested that the subject be kept on the agenda for the main SACRE and a sub-group could be considered to report back. There would also be further discussion at the regional meeting of the South Central Hub on 6th December in Winchester. There was a collective wish to see the good work locally being acknowledged and further concern that where RE is not made statutory it would be in danger of being cut when there are pressures on budgets.

(Councillor Ryan Brent had to leave the meeting at this point and Vice-Chair Councillor Suzy Horton took the chair)

The SACRE members stressed their role was to be responsible for collective worship and to ensure there is understanding between faiths to ensure there is a rich environment for pupils.

It was therefore proposed that a sub group meet to advise on the wording for the Chair and Vice-Chair to write to the RE Council and for a report to be brought back to the next meeting. Volunteers were Sam Duddles, Jane Kelly, Elizabeth Jenkerson, Sarah Sadler with Patricia Hannam (plus any other members who expressed an interest) to meet at St. Peter's House.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The report from the Professional Adviser is noted and;**
- (2) The Final report of the Commission on RE recommendations are noted.**
- (3) A standing item be added to the agenda for Portsmouth SACRE to continue to monitor the implementation of the Commission's findings.**
- (4) A sub group report back to the next meeting.**

13. Annual report 2017/18 (AI 13)

Patricia Hannam, as Professional Adviser, apologised that the draft had not been ready to be sent out in advance of the meeting and she presented the report at the meeting, but would give the opportunity for members to give their comments by the end of the following week. If there were no material

comments this would be approved, or if more adjustments were needed this would be brought to a future meeting for approval.

Patricia Hannam was pleased there had been additional recruits to Group C of teacher representatives (with 2 new members attending this meeting). Her intention was to give further attention to A Level results in the future, which Kari Laing (Portsmouth College) had offered to assist with. For GCSE results, whilst there had been a dramatic fall of those entering, those who did were performing well.

Patricia Hannam aimed to bring a 3 year action plan to the November meeting in 2019.

Elizabeth Jenkerson commented that the groups listed in Appendix D to be sent the annual report should include the Department for Education.

RESOLVED that, subject to any further comments, the Portsmouth SACRE Annual Report be noted and sent as approved to agreed bodies.

14. Guidance Document for Schools - draft for discussion (AI 14)

The latest mock-up of the advice document was circulated at the meeting. Justine Ball had co-ordinated the discussion groups. It was noted that a larger font size would be used for the final document. Whilst the intention was for this to be a useful guide for schools, all cases would continue to be looked at on an individual basis.

Some discussion took place on the title of the document, with members keen that it was not too wordy and that it reflect it was not RE guidance but guidance for schools dealing with issues of religion and belief. It was also suggested that some more visuals be added.

One of the benefits of the guidance would be to help tackle sensitive issues that could affect school attendance and child protection, and would be helpful for teachers.

Any further feedback should be made to Mike Stoneman and an updated version would be brought to the next meeting.

15. Date and venue of the next meeting (AI 15)

The next meeting would be held on **20th March 2019** (and not 12th as on the agenda) and would be held at the Civic Offices.

It was suggested that the summer meeting be held at a faith venue and it was requested that the autumn term meeting avoid inter-faith week if possible.

The meeting concluded at 6.25 pm.

Councillor Ryan Brent
Chair of SACRE