

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, 20 November 2019 at 4.30 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair) (Group D)

Group A - sarah coote, Elizabeth Jenkerson
Christine McMillan, Geoff Wheeler
John Mills, Chris Thomas, Akshat Metha

Group B - Jane Kelly & Revd Sam Duddles (Vice-Chair)

Group C - Aasha Small, Debbie Lucas
Group D - Maria Cole

Mike Stoneman, Patricia Hannam & Joanne Wildsmith

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Tom Coles, Sheikh Fazle Abbas Datoo, Syed Aminul Haque, Bowen, Sandra Gibb, Ali Beechurst and Ryan Brent

42. Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)

Councillor Horton, as Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked Aasha Small for taking members on a tour of Medina Primary School. SACRE members appreciated seeing the hard work going into the teaching of RE and were impressed by its evident application.

Introductions were then made around the table.

43. Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 2)

Aasha Small led the reflection, using the example of the representations of Brahmen in the Hindu faith and the qualities embodied in the most well known gods and goddesses and asking everyone to think of those who turn to them for different things.

44. Apologies for Absence (AI 3)

Apologies had been received from Councillor Tom Coles, Sandra Gibb, Sheikh Fazle Abbas Datoo, Sue Bowen, Helen Reeder, Ryan Brent and Syed Aminul Haque.

45. Declaration of Members' Interest (AI 4)

Elizabeth Jenkerson is on the West Hill Panel that judges grants for SACREs.

46. Minutes of the Previous meeting held on 26 June 2019 (AI 5)

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2019 be approved as a correct record.

47. Matters Arising from the minutes (AI 6)

- i) Artefact boxes used by schools (Min 37) - in response to questions
Mike Stoneman reported that Portsmouth schools should be aware of this resource through EMAS and as part of their signing up to traded services. It was suggested that if there were items missing that the appropriate faith groups could be contacted to ask if they would be willing to replace these. Mike would ask Karen Thomas and Rubi Giles to take forward this suggestion.
- ii) Pat Hannam reported that contact with secondary heads was going forward (action in Min 38) and also that she was still pursuing contact with charitable trusts to help fund cover for teachers attending courses.

48. Membership Update (AI 7)

The resignations of long-standing members Tom Blair (Roman Catholic) and Ruth Guyer (Judaism) were noted. The appointment of Ali Beechurst to Group C as a Primary Representative was welcomed.

As Ruth Guyer had been heavily involved in school visits and had been a previous Vice-Chair a card would be sent to thank her for her good services and her best wishes to the SACRE were reported.

Pat Hannam reported that efforts were being made to secure new replacement members.

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

Maria Cole reported that a directory of contacts for places of worship had previously been made available for schools; Mike Stoneman undertook to look into and asked if a copy of the old directory could be sent to him and Pat with a view to providing an updated electronic document. This could sit alongside the recent guidance document that had been published (refer to item 55).

50. Monitoring Group Report (AI 9)

Pat Hannam, Professional Adviser, explained for newer members the role of this group in looking at the effectiveness of the implementation of the agreed syllabus Living Difference III and to look at Ofsted findings and GCSE results.

Under the new Ofsted framework only 1 report had been available but RE was going to be considered more by their inspectors in the future. All school inspection visits will now be 2 days, with some receiving "deep dive" closer interrogation. Mike Stoneman reported that the Section 8 reports seen so far were very slim.

Pat Hannam reported that the inspectors want to check that the curriculum is taught with coherence and will look at the impact and intention of teachers. The indications are that RE will be reported back better and Pat was aware of more teachers being interested in attending RE courses. Debbie Lucas reported that Admiral Lord Nelson School had received a practice inspection, but this had not resulted in written feedback. There is a Specialist Advisory Group so that the inspectors would be more knowledgeable in their subjects with one subject advisor for RE, half of their time would be used to train inspectors. In response to questions it was further reported that there is a South East region for Ofsted and that the inspectors were unlikely to challenge the syllabus (which had been checked with the Hampshire County Council Legal Team), which was highly regarded and used by other local authorities.

Mike Stoneman reported that there would be an analysis of GCSE data once it was available, which was later this year.

SACRE received the monitoring group, as updated at the meeting, and noted the findings.

51. Constitution Revision - membership (AI 10)

When the SACRE had previously looked to update its constitution the issue of agreeing membership (particularly to Group A) for less established faith groups had been identified as needing further consideration. The need for membership to be valid had been discussed. Therefore the wording on the agenda had been suggested, in liaison with Portsmouth City Council's Legal Services, to be added to the amended constitution. SACRE members were supportive of this wording being reflected in the constitution, and there would be clarification that it related to the 1996 Education Act. **This process for using a membership sub group as and when needed was agreed.**

There was a further discussion regarding whether membership should be extended to parent governors and young people. It was felt that the responsibility for teaching RE lay with the schools.

52. Update regarding the forthcoming review of the Agreed Syllabus (AI 11)

Patricia Hannam, as Professional Adviser, wished to give advance notice that with the Agreed Syllabus needing to be adopted every 5 years (the current one was adopted in 2016 so would need updating in 2021) a review meeting was needed in 2020. It was suggested that the 4 local authorities review their joint syllabus together. Therefore there is a need to convene the Agreed Syllabus Conference, which would be immediately prior to the next full SACRE meeting, at which the 4 groups would need to discuss the minutes of

the previous meeting and then meet together to approve these. It was therefore imperative that all 4 groups would be represented to ensure a quorum was reached.

Patricia Hanna undertook to make known the date of the Hampshire meeting on the syllabus as she would be making a presentation there.

53. National and local updates on Religious Education (AI 12)

- i) Annual NASACRE Conference - Monday 18 May in London - at the next meeting volunteers would be sought to attend to represent Portsmouth SACRE. Elizabeth Jenkerson would be attending as a member of the national executive and she gave further details on keynote speakers and sessions; full details are available to view on the NASACRE website which all members would be reminded of logon details.

- ii) Commission on RE - the full report can be viewed here:

<https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/>

Research projects were being planned for looking into what the term "world views" means with a report due to be presented in the Spring and a 2 day conference in June for the REC.

- iii) Religious Literacy - The summary of the report had been sent out with the agenda. Patricia Hannam expanded on the report's findings, with the term 'religious literacy' being used loosely. Researchers had worked on an extended review looking at what literacy entails, from the historic context of the 1870 Elementary Education Act of functional literacy, which was different to critical literacy which had emerged and had been witnessed in the Civil Rights movement. She commended the report and some members of SACRE would look at this further in a reading group which Revd Sam Duddles offered to host.

54. Annual report 2018/19 (AI 13)

The draft annual report was circulated with the agenda. Discussion took place regarding the setting of the 4 distinct SACRE membership groups as part of the 1988 Act, with the Church of England having 4 representatives from the established church (which was different to the arrangements in Wales). It was reported that for the Hampshire SACRE the Humanist representative was co-opted and was non-voting.

It was suggested that the report be amended slightly at 1.3 regarding composition to be in line with the Portsmouth SACRE constitution, to show that the 4 the local authority (Group D) should include at least 2 elected members (not necessarily all). At 1.5 a function of SACRE is to recommend to the LA that the current agreed syllabus should be reviewed.

Patricia Hannam had included the detailed Action Plan, and one of the actions was to ensure that replacement members are found to fill vacancies. Aasha Small offered to get in touch with the local Gurdwara regarding the Sikh vacancy.

John Mills asked why there was no mention of the short RE course; Patricia Hannam responded that this had ceased to count towards accountability measures.

RESOLVED that the Portsmouth SACRE Annual Report, as amended, be received and forwarded to the relevant national and local bodies.

55. Guidance Document (for information) (AI 14)

Mike Stoneman presented the document which Justine Ball of HIAS and a working group including SACRE members had contributed towards, which was now published to provide guidance to schools. This had been sent to all schools and was published on the Portsmouth Education Partnership website, and this was receiving positive feedback from the headteachers. Aasha Small concurred that this was a useful reference point and her school would be sharing this with colleagues at a staff meeting to raise awareness. Patricia Hannam felt that this would also be useful for the professional development of staff.

The availability of the guidance document was welcomed and noted.

56. Policy for Determinations on collective worship (AI 15)

Patricia Hannam explained the background to this item. There had been no requests from schools in recent years for determination of withdrawal from collective worship in LA schools and academies where these are not schools of religious character, as for all the other schools this should be broadly Christian. If a school has sufficient numbers of children who are not Christian it is possible for a local authority school to make a request to the SACRE that this is set aside (if agreed collective worship still takes place but it is not broadly Christian). For academies the request goes to the Department for Education.

Therefore an up to date procedure should be in place to deal with requests for determinations from schools (it cannot be by individual parents) who have consulted with their governors. Patricia Hannam was taking advice from London Boroughs, where requests were more prevalent, and would like to meet with a one-off sub group to discuss a draft procedure before it is taken to the full SACRE for ratification.

Geoff Wheeler suggested that in fulfilling the SACRE role of monitoring collective worship a questionnaire could be sent to schools.

It was therefore **AGREED that:**

- i) A small sub group look at a draft policy for determination in January; volunteers included Aasha Small, Jane Kelly, Debbie**

Lucas, Elizabeth Jenkerson and Sam Duddles, to report back to SACRE.

ii) Mike Stoneman and Patricia Hannam would look at questions for schools on collective worship (and withdrawals).

57. Date and venue of the next meeting (AI 16)

The next meeting (including a short separate meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference) would take place on Tuesday 18th March 2020 at 4.30pm at the Guildhall.

Venues for future meeting were discussed and it was hoped that a visit to a mosque could be arranged for the June meeting (Debbie Lucas offered to make contact once a date was confirmed).

The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair of SACRE