

## **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, 3 March 2021 at 4.00 pm as a virtual meeting.

### **Present**

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

Group A - sarah coote, Elizabeth Jenkerson, Christine McMillan, Pastor Chris Thomas, Sandra Teacher, Geoff Wheeler, Jaswant Singh-Digpal, Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dattoo

Group B - Sue Bowen, Jane Kelly, Revd Sam Duddles (Vice Chair)

Group C - Ali Beechurst

Group D - Maria Cole, Taki Jaffer

Debbie Anderson, Patricia Hannam & Lisa Gallacher

Geoff Wade, Jim O' Donnell, Duncan Dibb-Holland and Barbara Spiegelhalter (observing today from Humanists UK)

### **1. Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)**

Councillor Horton, as Chair welcomed everyone and introductions were made. She particularly welcomed new members Sandra Teacher as the Group A Jewish representative and Jaswant Singh-Digpal as the Group A Sikh representative.

### **2. Apologies for Absence (AI 2)**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Tom Coles. John Mills and Aasha Small.

### **3. Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 3)**

Maria Coles explained she had been part of the SACRE for over 20 years starting in Plymouth and later moving to Portsmouth. She gave two short readings that summarised how she felt about the teaching of religion to children. One was an extract from a schools Ofsted inspection and she said she believed teaching children about religion is good as it gives children a balance against racial prejudice. The second extract was by Rabbi Pete Tobias.

### **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 12 November 2020 (AI 5)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020 be approved as a correct record.**

**6. Matters Arising from the minutes of 12 November 2020 (AI 6)**

Patricia Hannam (Professional Advisor to the SACRE) explained that since the last meeting a small group had met to discuss updating the SACRE directory. An electronic copy had been located which was very good news and this now needed to be updated. Patricia was in discussion with Debbie Anderson, (Head of School Improvement at Portsmouth City Council) with regard to the next steps. If SACRE are content the group will continue to meet and take this forward.

**7. Membership Update (AI 7)**

Patricia Hannam presented the report. SACRE was pleased to reappoint Sarah Coote as Quaker representative and Geoff Wheeler as Baptist representative to Group A. Sandra Teacher as a Jewish representative and Jaswat Singh-Digpal as Sikh representative were appointed as new members to group A. Sue Bowen was also reappointed to Group B. This was excellent news for Portsmouth SACRE to fill many of the vacancies.

There is still a vacancy for a Roman Catholic representative and Patricia was awaiting a response from the diocesan office. There was also a vacancy for a Buddhist representative. Since the report was written she was delighted to receive a response from Humanist UK. Consequently, SACRE has Humanist observers present, with a view to make an appointment in time for SACRE's next meeting in June.

Sandra Teacher said she was very happy to be part of the SACRE as a representative of the Board of Deputies of British Jews said she would only be able to join the SACRE whilst the meetings continued to be online as she lives in London. She hoped that someone from the Portsmouth Jewish community would be able to take over in due course.

The Chair welcomed the new members of the SACRE.

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

There were no updates.

**9. Monitoring Group Report (AI 9)**

Patricia Hannam, as Professional Advisor presented her report summarising the discussions of the Monitoring Sub Group which had been held on 11 February 2021.

She extended an invitation for SACRE members to join the next teacher focus group meeting so members can hear the discussions. Elizabeth Jenkerson had already attended some of these meetings. The meeting would be on 21 April at 4pm.

With regard to monitoring, Patricia said that with the support of the Local Authority a Portsmouth Primary RE network meeting had been re-established to develop contact with primary subject leaders. The monitoring group are looking at school websites to look at what a good school website would look like and they are in the process of communicating this to schools.

Debbie Anderson added that there will be skills and concepts children need to catch up on but it is important that this is broad and ambitious. Debbie was aware that this is what schools will be pursuing, it would not just be English and maths.

Councillor Horton said she regularly joined meetings with primary and secondary headteachers and she was excited to hear this morning the plans for primary schools around focusing on ensuring breadth of the curriculum.

**The monitoring report was noted.**

#### **10. National and local updates on Religious Education (AI 10)**

Patricia Hamman presented the report and showed members of the SACRE some slides to help explain the concept of worldviews. Worldviews is still open to interpretation and could mean at the very least either:

- More material/content to include in the curriculum in addition to Religion and/or
- A greater focus on the lived experience of religious life and/or
- A re-orientation of the subject - to begin with children or young person's interests.

Patricia put this into the context of the Living Difference approach to teaching RE and the review, and said that teachers are saying that they already feel confident to handle the ambiguity of worldviews in light of the pedagogical approach to teaching in the Local Agreed Syllabus.

Patricia recommended that SACRE members read the THEOS report on worldviews (linked in her report) by Professor Trevor Cooling, Professor Bob Bowie and Professor Farid Panjwani. Jane Kelly also recommended the THEOS report which she felt gave a very good overview of the debate so far. At the end the three writers give their personal reflection and talk about their journeys.

In response to a question regarding whether worldviews would be looked at from a global or local perspective, Patricia highlighted that the law had not

been changed in relation to religious education. Whatever is decided to do by the summer would need to remain within the law. It was anticipated that Living Difference IV would stay with the existing purpose statement and have an appendix which explains the syllabus' position in relation to worldviews at that point. There is still a huge amount of dialogue going on in the national RE community.

Patricia added that she felt the cycle of enquiry is robust enough so teachers can teach the 'fuzzy edges' of what it is to live "with a religious or other orientation on life". Teachers are concerned as there is only one lesson a week for this. Any members of the SACRE would be welcome at the next teachers' focus group meeting on 21 April to share the latest thinking regarding curriculum making with Living Difference IV.

Sheikh Fazle Abbas said he had had a discussion with Patricia with regard to his feelings on worldviews. He felt that currently to look into the inclusion of worldviews we might not be able to give the full coverage with regard to the teaching of RE as part of the statutory curriculum. He noted that this was a conversation that was still developing.

Patricia said that it was worth thinking what was envisaged in the 1944 Education Act. She hoped this could be met in a collaborative way and explaining our relationship to a worldviews discussion was likely to be in an appendix rather than a radical change to the syllabus.

Debbie Anderson said that with regard to the cycle of enquiry, she felt for children and young people the ability to reflect and be critical thinkers is a crucial key skill in this digital age. She said it felt timely to be doing this review now.

Revd Duddles said she could understand the concerns about a radical change to the RE curriculum but could also see the appetite to look at the broader questions. During this pandemic we are all in a level playing field and our worldviews have been reduced to our home life and how we live that.

Patricia said they are also considering adding in pondering time to the syllabus when this is reviewed. This would be time that is unclaimed and less planned where the young people can follow their own leadings and interests. They are hoping to offer the opportunity for schools to plan up to 20% for pondering time. This could be carried in in three different ways:

- 1) For the teacher to allow every year for child to follow their own interests. Towards the end of the term pupils would make a presentation to the class;
- 2) In a unit the teacher teaches two cycles of enquiry before giving then space of three or four lessons for children/young people to follow up research on anything else linked with the unit but not already covered by the teacher;
- 3) To complete a cycle of enquiry, and after the 'evaluate/discernment step' for the child/young person to follow a further 'communicate and apply' step taking the enquiry out into the community to research what is going on in relation to what has been studied in the classroom.

There were some schools that were going to trial each of these potential options. Revd Duddles said this sounded brilliant. The Chair said this was an opportune time to make any changes to the RE curriculum.

**The SW AERIAC SACRE Conference** held on Monday 1 March was attended by over 50 people. Chris Thomas and Jane Kelly who attended on behalf of Portsmouth SACRE were invited to give a brief update. Chris said that the presentation on world views was very good. There is a huge range on what people think is worldviews. His concern is that this needs to be agreed as otherwise it will diffuse an already complicated syllabus.

Jane Kelly added that there was a very good presentation from Ruth Flanagan about how the worldviews approach bridges the gap between the typical secular children in the classroom and people from a religious background who they might see as 'exotic'. The worldviews approach reinforces that we all have shared experiences.

Jane added that was also a very good key note address from Farid Panjwani talking about decolonising the curriculum and gave some examples that he had spoken about. Patricia added that she was hoping to ask Farid to repeat his presentation to teachers in this area which was welcomed by the SACRE.

**NASACRE on 24<sup>th</sup> May** - Jane Kelly and Sam Duddles said they would like to attend this meeting. Elizabeth Jenkerson added that there was a NASACRE planning meeting tomorrow to finalise the plans. The current plan was to encourage a maximum of four representatives from each SACRE.

Revd Sam Duddles said that she had attended the last NASACRE meeting in November where they saw reports from the Westhill project from schools that had received funding, which could be found on the NASACRE website. She gave brief details of the two projects. If any other members of SACRE wished to attend the meeting in May they should get in touch.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted and that Revd Sam Duddles and Jane Kelly would attend the NASACRE conference in May.**

#### **11. Date and venue of the next meeting (AI 11)**

The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 4pm and this meeting was likely to be held virtually. This date was noted.

The meeting concluded at 5.20 pm.

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Councillor Suzy Horton  
Chair of SACRE