



Title of meeting: Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Date of meeting: 28 March 2023

Subject: SACRE Monitoring Group Report

Report by: Justine Ball, SACRE Advisor

- 1. Purpose of report:** The purpose of this report is to inform SACRE of the findings and discussions that took place during the meeting of the SACRE monitoring sub-group on 22 February 2023.

Members shared ways to widen the membership of the group and the Terms of Reference for the monitoring group were discussed. The group received updates on professional RE education, monitoring the effectiveness of RE and an update of results from the GCSE examination series in 2022. Further updates on the 2021 census results on religion, the monitoring survey for RE and Collective Worship and the recent website monitoring activity for Local Authority schools was discussed.

2. Recommendations:

That SACRE notes the findings of the monitoring group meeting and requests SACRE volunteers to join the Monitoring Group in the Summer term 2023.

That SACRE notes the amended Terms of Reference for the Monitoring Group and approves them (attached as Appendix A).

- 3. Background:** The Monitoring Group met at 4.00pm on 22 February 2023.

Present: Sam Duddles (SACRE Chair and group B), Jane Kelly (group B), Elizabeth Jenkerson (A), Taki Jaffer (group D) and Councillor Asghar Shah (group D)

Also in attendance: Justine Ball (SACRE Professional Advisor), Debbie Anderson (Head of School Improvement), Chris May (Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE), and Karen Martin (SACRE Clerk).

Apologies were received from Kari Lang (Group C) and Councillor Benedict Swann (Group D).

4. Inspector/Adviser Updates:

Monitoring Group Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the group were reviewed and updated by the group.



It was agreed that the Terms of Reference for the group and a draft SACRE Code of Conduct¹ for all members would be circulated to the full SACRE to be reviewed and agreed at the next full SACRE meeting. Once reviewed and agreed by the membership, all members would be invited to sign it (as will new members). The Code of Conduct will then be circulated at the Autumn Term SACRE meeting each year for collective agreement.

5. Updates on Portsmouth 2022 GCSE Religious Studies examinations

Chris May informed the Group that there had been a drop in GCSE RE entries nationally and this was of concern. Following discussion, it was noted that only one school in the city was currently entering students for GCSE RE. Schools faced pressure to deliver good results in core subjects and this may be a contributing factor in dropping numbers studying GCSE RS in this area (there was a small increase of 1.7% nationally). It was also noted that nationally and in this area, there is a lack of trainee RE teachers and that RE has arguably a higher proportion of non-specialists teaching RE than other subjects. This is likely to have an impact on teaching to GCSE level.

Justine Ball noted dropping numbers of RE specialist teachers was a national concern. The Association of University Lecturers in RE (AULRE) and the National RE Council were raising awareness of the benefits of teaching RE.

It was agreed that the RE Lead at St Jude's CE Primary School be invited to give a short presentation on how she makes RE engaging before the full SACRE meeting in March.

6. School Website Monitoring

A review of the Local Authority (LA) school websites had been undertaken by members of the group and the results were discussed. It was noted that:

- A large majority of LA schools published a statement about how RE was taught on their websites.
- Over three quarters referred to Living Difference IV (LDIV) and provided a link.
- Generally, schools showed some progression in RE, though in some places it would have benefited from more information.
- Only one third of schools referred to the right to withdraw though it was acknowledged in the meeting that it is not required to publish an RE policy on a school website.
- The information on Collective Worship (CW) tended to be less than RE and only one third of schools published a CW policy on their website (again not a requirement).
- Although British Values is still required, it was given less emphasis.
- Notwithstanding this, two third of LA schools highlighted British Values on their website.

¹ Attached as **Appendix C** to the Membership and Training Report



- Some of the websites were difficult to navigate and it was hard to find information.
- It was also acknowledged that schools may well have policies for RE and CW which are not on their website.

7. Other sources of evidence of effectiveness of RE:

The Inspector/adviser reported that there were very few mentions for RE specifically in the Ofsted reports for Portsmouth. One school had received an RE deep dive and this was a positive experience for the RE leader who had provided feedback to the SACRE adviser on this.

8. Monitoring RE and Collective Worship (CW) Survey:

A survey had been sent to Headteachers of LA maintained schools on 20 February. The survey will also be included in the Portsmouth Education Partnership newsletter on 24 February and all schools will be invited to submit returns. The survey sought information including: the number of pupils on roll, how many are withdrawn for all or parts of RE, how many are withdrawn for all or parts of CW and what further advice/ help schools would like.

A summary report will be produced once all the responses have been received.

9. School visits:

School visits were discussed. These had a focus on the RE curriculum to explore how the subject is engaging, meaningful and interesting for all children. Work was discussed mapping golden threads in schools to ensure more rigour, show progression and be engaging.

Revd Sam Duddles offered to help with school visits by visiting herself or finding others to visit. She noted that she is in the process of launching a community project including working on a sanctuary garden with a pizza oven to feed local people.

10. UK Census 2021

Justine Ball introduced a report on religious activity in our area drawn from the 2021 UK Census, which had been prepared and circulated. She stated that she shared this information with schools at the recent RE network.

It was agreed that looking for, and promoting, positive examples of faith in the community could be developed through the full SACRE before being shared with RE teachers (through Networks and school visits), noting that this would tie in with the golden threads in the Living Difference IV syllabus.