

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 12 June 2024 at 4:30pm at St Swithun's Catholic Primary School, Taswell Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Southsea PO5 2RG.

Present

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

Evangelical Church - Pastor Chris Thomas
Humanist - Barbara Spiegelhalter
Muslim - Sheikh Fazle Abbas Datto
Quaker - sarah coote
United Reformed Church - Christine McMillan

Group B Representatives - Church of England.

Sue Bowen
Revd Sam Duddles
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.

Zoe Killick - Primary Headteacher Representative
Fiona Kelly - Primary School Representative
Kari Laing - Post-16 Representative
Beth Smith - Secondary School Representative
Trish Gumede - Teacher Liaison Panel 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 Adviser
Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE
Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement, Portsmouth
Karen Martin, Local Democracy Officer, SACRE Clerk

Observers:

Captain Sarah Listers, Salvation Army (prospective Group A member)
Jenny Verhiest, Headteacher, St Swithun's Catholic Primary School

16. Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)

Revd Sam Duddles, SACRE Chair (Group B), welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Mrs Jenny Verhiest, Headteacher for the tour of the school. Justine Ball, Professional Adviser explained that Michael Zeffert, Jewish representative (Group A) had informed the Clerk that the meeting clashed with the first day of the important Jewish festival of Shavuoth (Pentecost) and he would therefore be unable to attend the meeting. She asked members to check that the dates of future meetings (listed under Agenda Item 12) do not clash and she will also do all she can to check for potential clashes in the future.

17. Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Apologies had been received from Revd Ray Goddess (Group A), Councillor Benedict Swann (Group D) and Jessie Wilson, Council of Portsmouth Students (Co-opted member).

18. Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 3)

The moment for quiet reflection was taken by Fiona Kelly, Primary Teacher (Group C). She invited those present to reflect on the power of collaboration and the power it holds to create something truly remarkable.

19. Declarations of Members' Interest (AI 4)

There were none.

20. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 March 2024 (AI 5)

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 March 2024.

Matters Arising from the minutes

The following update from the previous minutes was noted:

Minute No. Withdrawal from RE and Collective Worship Survey - discussed at the Monitoring Group meeting on 22 May 2024, and it was agreed the results would be shared with the SACRE. Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement, informed members that there had been a 25% response rate; that this was not necessarily the same 25% that responded previously and that generally, withdrawal from RE and/or Collective Worship was not a huge problem. She noted that schools reported that some parents ask questions about RE and Collective Worship and, importantly that schools reported feeling supported by SACRE and EMAS (Ethnic Minority Advisory Service). A mix of LA and Academy schools responded across both primary and secondary phases. Most respondents (82%) reported no withdrawals from all RE lessons this academic year. This was the same for part withdrawals with 71% reporting no partial withdrawals either. 76% reported no withdraws from all Collective Worship and 59% no partial withdrawals either. There were a range of reasons offered for withdrawals across RE and Collective Worship, mainly linked to the family's religious beliefs. Some respondents said that further guidance and support on this area would be useful.

21. SACRE Membership and Member Training report (AI 6)

Justine Ball, Professional Adviser, informed the SACRE that the attached report provides an update on the SACRE's membership, training and other opportunities.

Justine Ball noted that Portsmouth SACRE members do a lot of training, that training through NASACRE is free for Portsmouth members and that she runs training on Living Difference IV (Portsmouth's locally agreed syllabus) twice a year and SACRE members are welcome to attend. Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement commented that funding training through NASACRE and other organisations demonstrates the Council's commitment to the SACRE.

In relation to current vacancies, it was noted that there are vacancies in Group A and the Clerk is working with nominating bodies to fill these; that Groups C and D are at full strength; and that Jane Kelly (Group B) reported that another email will be circulated by the diocese seeking an additional Group B member.

Justine Ball reported that she had attended the NASACRE conference and that the organisation is looking to register as a CIO - more information is at [Proposed CIO Constitution changes](#). As part of this process, NASACRE has reviewed its constitution and copy of the draft constitution can be seen at the following link [Draft NASACRE Constitution May 2024](#) .

RESOLVED - to:

- a) Note the membership vacancies set out in paragraph 4 of this report and that the Authority has approached relevant nominating bodies with a view to appointing additional members.**
- b) Note that Captain Sarah Listers (Salvation Army) has been invited to observe the meeting with a view to being appointed to Group A.**
- c) Note the appointment of Zoe Killick (Primary Headteacher), Ella Harbut (Early Years) and Trish Gumede (Teachers' Liaison Panel) as representatives of Group C.**
- d) Note 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 B of the report) free of charge and that members should take advantage of these opportunities.**

22. Ofsted Subject Report on Religious Education (RE) (AI 7)

Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE introduced the report on the recently published Ofsted Subject Report on RE. He noted that it is extensive and wide-ranging, that the last subject report on RE was in 2013 and that there was a research review published in 2021.

Chris May presented the summary of the Report and provided members of SACRE with the context including the legal requirements for RE which are unaffected by the Report.

Chris May also set out:

- The factors Ofsted felt contributed to better quality RE in England including strong teacher subject knowledge for which the Head of School Improvement provides funding in Portsmouth; access to professional development which in Portsmouth is supported by the adoption of a good local syllabus (Living Difference IV); access to HIAS and other information on Moodle.
- That the main findings of the Report which present a national picture and are therefore not necessarily relevant to Portsmouth. One aspect Ofsted noted was that the overwhelming majority of teachers had not received training, but this is not the case here where teachers have access to a lot of support and events.
- The key recommendations in the report noted that the syllabus should ensure that teaching is rigorous and challenging and that it demonstrably builds on what pupils already know and balance the breadth and depth of study of religious and non-religious traditions to ensure that pupils may make sense of a complex world.
- That in relation to teaching and assessment, schools should be ambitious for pupils, and develop all aspects of knowledge and the complexity of religious and non-religious traditions over time. Chris May explained that Living Difference IV does this.
- That all teachers have the subject and pedagogical knowledge that they need to teach RE well. In Portsmouth, he explained that specific CPD opportunities are offered, and that Living Difference IV sets out models of curriculum time schools should provide.
- When reviewing and rewriting Living Difference IV, which will start taking place in the next academic year, advisers should make sure that these enable pupils to build deep knowledge of the chosen religious and non-religious traditions.

Chris May then presented some considerations specifically with Portsmouth in mind including that:

- The Monitoring Group considers the Ofsted reports for Portsmouth every term and the reports are generally positive and reflect high quality RE being taught in the main
- Schools have access to HIAS advisors along with free planning and advice for teachers including at Primary Network meetings.
- There will be two webinars on Ofsted and RE - on 17 June and 1 October - and Portsmouth SACRE members are welcome to join these.
- Ofsted and RE will form part of primary and secondary subject leader training going forward and will be discussed during future school visits.

Chris May then noted that Living Difference in its various guises has been in existence for 20 years and it is underpinned by research. Going forward key areas for consideration will be the amount of time between lessons, and Justine Ball is already working with some schools in Hampshire on this aspect; and teaching non-religious traditions in the curriculum being taught in a systematic way.

The Chair thanked Chris May for the presentation and noted that it was encouraging to hear how much Portsmouth schools are already doing. In response to a question from Pastor Chris Thomas (Group A), Chris May confirmed that although academies now form most schools in Portsmouth (70% overall) and they are not required to follow the locally agreed syllabus, many in fact do. Others may adopt a syllabus from outside the area, or centrally from their Academy Trust - but all must deliver the same depth and breadth of locally agreed syllabus. In Portsmouth, despite the complexity of the education landscape, officers maintain good relationships with academy schools in the city. Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement noted that training is made available to all staff and the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP) is inclusive and all its communications and resources are also available to all schools.

Following a question from Jane Kelly (Group B), Justine Ball explained that she believed the Report was looking for more than knowledge retention and regurgitation, and that she felt this Report needed to be taken together with the 2021 RE Research Review which set out three different types of knowledge. Debbie Anderson agreed, noting that this comes across in personal development that RE makes a major contribution to the knowledge that pupils need to succeed in life.

Christine McMillan (Group A) suggested that guidance about the statutory expectations for RE for schools should be updated and that the government should also ensure that there is appropriate clarity about what is taught in RE, and when and where it is taught, for those schools where Ofsted inspects the subject. This would help schools and, particularly, leaders and teachers of RE

RESOLVED - to note the report.

23. School Website Monitoring Update (AI 8)

Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE introduced the report and explained that this followed a similar exercise last year and that it was undertaken as part of the SACRE's duty to monitor the effectiveness of the Portsmouth Agreed Syllabus. He explained that the survey provides a 'snapshot' of RE and Collective Worship provision in the area. Generally, websites across phases show a clear curriculum sequence, and in primary, commonly reference Living Difference IV and the concepts being taught. The ease of access and level of detail is variable, however. Examples of good practice noted including colour coding curriculum maps and golden thread concepts. Where schools did not have an explicit RE policy, this seems to be because an increasing number now have greater detail on the RE page, and so this essentially forms the RE policy.

Chris May informed the SACRE that for both Primary and Secondary, there is a lack of information relating to Collective Worship and of the right to withdrawal from this and RE more broadly. However, since the survey was done, the Department for Education has stated that the right to withdraw from RE lessons must now be on all school websites. Debbie Anderson, Head of School

Improvement, clarified that the new directive only affects RE lessons and not Collective Worship and she confirmed that this will be communicated to schools.

Following a question from Pastor Chris Thomas (Group A), Chris May explained that although British values are not specifically part of RE, how they are communicated gives an idea of the ethos of the school. Justine Ball, Professional Adviser, added that discussions about tolerance and respect for religions are often a vehicle for RE.

In response to a question from Sue Bowen (Group B), Chris May explained none of the websites reviewed this time were from a faith school and confirmed that examples of good practice were being shared through the Primary Network and school visits.

Debbie Anderson explained that the survey was useful and did not add to the workload of schools. Chris May added that it allowed the SACRE to monitor for themes, possible areas of concern and very occasionally, an opportunity to correct wrong information.

RESOLVED - to note the report.

24. SACRE Monitoring Group Report (AI 9)

Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE informed the SACRE the sub-group met on 24 May and that the report sets out a summary of its activities to monitor professional RE education, the effectiveness of RE, recent Ofsted inspections, the implementation of Living Difference IV including training in RE, school visits and other support activities. The Monitoring Group also received a summary of the Ofsted Subject Report on RE and considered proposed amendments to the SACRE constitution (Agenda Item 10).

Justine Ball, Professional Adviser, reported that she had also conducted a training session with Bilingual Assistants at EMAS since the last meeting and this was an excellent session. There is a joint conference later in June (AULRE and AREIAC) at which Justine Ball and Chris May will both be presenting.

Chris May noted that although the Winchester Humanities PGCE has started to recruit for students with RE as their main subject and the bursary seems to be helping increase the numbers choosing RE as their primary subject, the funding for RE Subject Knowledge Enhancement course funding has been withdrawn. These courses support those wishing to train in RE, but with qualifications in other areas.

RESOLVED - to note the findings of the Monitoring Group meeting.

25. SACRE Constitution (AI 10)

Justine Ball, Professional Adviser, informed members that following the SACRE's decision to consider updating the Portsmouth SACRE constitution,

she had, also as agreed, consulted a member of each Group. She offered her thanks to Pastor Chris Thomas, Rev Sam Duddles and Kari Laing for their help.

Justine Ball explained that many of the proposed changes had been made to add detail or clarity and reflect good practice other initiatives, such as the development of the SACRE Code of Conduct. She noted that NASACRE produces information on drafting constitutions, and this had also been considered. She added that the consensus was that it did not need to be reviewed every year and that every four years would be sufficient.

Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato (Group A) thanked officers for their work on the review. He noted that in the list of religions listed in Group A, some are listed as traditions. Justine Ball clarified that the descriptions reflected those in the locally agreed syllabus, and they had been subject to considerable consultation and reflection at the time. In discussion, it was agreed that "Muslim traditions" would be amended to "Muslim faith" and that the other representatives on this list would also be consulted.

RESOLVED - to:

- a. Agree the draft Portsmouth SACRE Constitution attached to this report, subject to any amendments relating to descriptions of religions, faiths or traditions (Group A) and the Authority's legal advisors.**
- b. Recommend to the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education that the Local Authority accepts the request by the SACRE to revise its Constitution and endorses the revised Portsmouth SACRE Constitution.**
- c. Publish the agreed SACRE Constitution on the Authority's website so that it is available to SACRE members and members of the public.**
- d. Review the Constitution every four years.**

26. National and Local RE Matters report (AI 11)

Chris May, Hampshire Secondary Teaching and Learning Adviser for RE briefly summarised some key national and local RE developments to give a wider view of RE generally. He highlighted:

- The RE Council 'Religion and Worldviews Approach to RE Toolkit' which has a focus on lived experience that resonates with Living Difference IV and give a useful update on national developments.
- That nationally, the number of students taking GCSE RE has remained stable, but the number of hours taught by teachers with no post A-level qualification remains one of the highest at 26%.
- RE Hubs runs Places of Interest and School Speaker training online and SACRE members are encouraged to register for training if they have not already done so and wish to speak in schools.

- The RExChange Conference will run in October and aims to bring together teachers and researchers in RE and has a wide selection of keynote speakers and seminars.

RESOLVED - to note the report.

Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato (Group A) wished to thank Portsmouth schools for the way they supported children from the Muslim community during Ramadan. Debbie Anderson, the Head of School improvement, said that she would mention this at a future Headteachers Briefing meeting.

27. Dates of future meeting dates (AI 12)

RESOLVED - to agree that the next meeting will take place at 4.30pm on Wednesday 6 November 2024. Venue to be confirmed.

The SACRE noted that dates for future dates (venues to be confirmed):

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Wednesday 2 July 2025

Wednesday 12 November 2025

All meetings will take place at 4.30pm. Any tour or talk will take place at 4.00pm and details will be notified in advance. If no venue is available, meetings will take place remotely on Teams.

The meeting concluded at 6.00pm.