

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday, 16 March 2016, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm

		Minutes
Present:		Mrs Lindsay Thorne (Chairman), Mr Ian Hopwood (Vice-Chairman), Karen Bubb, Mr Graham Bounds, Mr Chris Giles, Mrs Christine Parker and Ms Kerry Poole.
Also attended:		Kate Griffiths, Barry Newton, Stephen Pett and Jack Symes.
539	Apologies for Absence and Substitutions	<p>Apologies were received from Sue Askin, Stephanie Boulter, Ellie Hill, Tasnim Khawaja, John Lally, Tracy Lister, Robin Lunn and Yvonne Stollard.</p> <p>Karen Bubb attended for Ellie Hill.</p> <p>Jack Symes, a trainee teacher from Birmingham University attended the meeting as a visitor.</p>
540	Declaration of Interests	None
541	Confirmation of the Minutes	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2015 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.</p> <p>It was suggested that a thank you be sent to Norman Mills for all the work he did with SACRE before he took on his missionary work in London. The members agreed that this should be done.</p>
542	Babcock	<p>Barry Newton, Schools Manager for school improvement, explained that the Learning and Achievement section of the Local Authority had been commissioned out to Babcock on 1 October 2015. There had previously been some discussion as to whether SACRE would be included in the Commissioning process but it had since been established that SACRE had been included.</p> <p>Previously the Local Authority had given a budget to SACRE – the majority of which had been given to RE Today for an advisor. Barry had asked Babcock how it wished to support SACRE in future and due to the small size of the Learning and Achievement Section (now 7 where it had originally been 70) and the lack of any internal expertise, Babcock had agreed that they would</p>

extend the contract with RE Today for a further year for 2016/17.

In April 2015 the Local Authority had allocated SACRE £8,000 and after the RE Today contract had been paid, £3,414 had been left unspent as at 1 October. However all the money from different budgets had been put together and given over to Babcock as one pot and at no point had the County Council specified that £3414 should go to SACRE. Babcock had since made the decision that the money should not be returned to SACRE. The room and support from Democratic Services would continue to be provided by the Local Authority and any expenses can be put through to Babcock and may be paid.

Barry also pointed out that under the Fairer Funding agreement the Government had shown it would support school improvement being separated from Local Government and this fits in with the move to ensure all schools were academies by 2020. This would mean that SACRE would not have the same responsibilities next year.

The Chairman told the meeting that the money had been allocated to go towards the training of teachers to set up a sustainable network of support groups in an arrangement of local hubs. This had been proposed by RE Today at previous meetings. All the members agreed that they supported this idea.

The Chairman proposed that she write to the Leader of the Council on behalf of SACRE to point out that the Local Authority had allocated the money to SACRE in April 2015 and any alteration to that budget should have been discussed under the democratic process by the County Council and SACRE. In October SACRE had not been listed as part of the Commissioning process and therefore SACRE had no reason to believe the budget was not still available until the money had been asked for in March.

RESOLVED that SACRE unanimously supported the suggestion of writing to the Leader of the Council regarding the budget situation and how the commissioning process had affected SACRE.

Stephen Pett clarified that RE Today had agreed that in 2016/17 they would support 3 SACRE meetings, three network meetings - 2 for primary schools and 1 for secondary; they would run 2 conferences - one for primary/middle schools and one for secondary; and

would keep SACRE up to date with national issues.

As part of their 2015/16 contract they had organised the following;

Conferences

Two primary conferences would take place on 7 and 8 June at Worcester Racecourse and at Whitecross School. The focus would be on the Agreed Syllabus with Primary Teachers volunteering to pass on good practice. The conference would run partly like a teach meet.

There was some discussion about whether it would be useful for faith representatives to be present at the conferences and a teacher member of SACRE pointed out that it would be most useful to be able to get faith representatives into schools so that pupils could work on their questioning skills. Stephen pointed out that most people would need training to be able to go into schools but a pack being prepared by Tracy Lister was a start towards identifying appropriate local people. Graham Bounds agreed that he would be willing to go into schools.

The Secondary Conference would be held on 23 June at Bransford as it was a joint conference with Herefordshire, and would also support the syllabus and help schools prepare for exams.

The Chairman asked if the University and Babcock would help with advertising the conferences.

Network meetings

Network meetings had taken place at 2 primary schools – St Georges and Whittington.

Special RE

There was a conference for special schools being organised for 11 October.

544 GCSE Head of Department Conference

Heads of RE had been invited to a conference held at South Bromsgrove High School. The aim of the conference was to support colleagues now that academic rigour had increased. It was an interactive day and gave teachers new ideas about how to teach as well as giving them the opportunity to meet publishers, RE organisations and exam boards.

Chris Giles explained that 33 Heads of RE attended and were able to share ideas and they also worked on producing schemes of work. The attendees found the conference was particularly helpful for this year with the changes to the exam syllabus.

Next year it may be possible to combine this conference with the one organised by RE Today.

545 RE Exam Results

Chris Giles had looked at the exam results for GCSEs and A levels compared to the national figures. Worcestershire was doing well compared to the national figure – 80% of schools were doing RE which was more than the national figure and although the numbers being entered for the short course GCSE were greatly reduced, the number entered for the full course had increased.

At A level lots of schools were doing RE as an option as they felt there was not enough time in the timetable to fit it in for every pupil. This meant that numbers being entered had fallen but the results had improved.

Some schools were not doing any RE due to leadership teams feeling English, Maths and Science were more important because that was what they were graded on. This situation was a concern to SACRE members so it was agreed that this should be discussed at the next SACRE meeting with the suggestion that SACRE write to certain schools to ask if there was any way they could support the school to fulfil its legal obligations to provide RE.

RESOLVED that at the next meeting SACRE would discuss actions that could be taken to support schools who offered little or no RE.

546 Future Projects

Excellent RE

It had been hoped that the remaining SACRE funding could have gone towards training teachers and setting up the hub model of clusters to support RE Teachers. The plan involved an initial three and a half days training after which the model would have been self-sustaining. Unfortunately now the money was no longer available it would not be possible to provide the training.

Youth SACRE

This would be helpful to enable schools to fulfil their community cohesion responsibilities but it would not help

547 National RE Update

to support teachers. As there was now no extra funding for additional work, SACRE would not pursue this at present.

Funding Applications

None at present.

NATRE Primary and Secondary RE Survey

The Primary survey was open until the end of March. The results of the secondary survey show that some schools do not meet their legal or contractual requirements for RE. The GCSE full course was very popular with schools but there had been a rapid decline in the numbers taking the short course. Teachers reported that they had received little subject specific training in the last year.

Major reports into RE

'A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools', 'Living with Difference' and 'RE for Real' all support the place of RE in schools and the way it prepared pupils for life in modern Britain.

'The RE Council Commission: Review of the legal and wider policy framework for RE' had been set up following the above reports. The evidence would be collected with a final report due in mid-2018.

Judicial Review 2015

A high court judgment had ruled that GCSE RS 'may fulfil the legal requirement for RE but does not necessarily do so'. It went on to say that 'the state must accord equal respect to different religious convictions and to non-religious beliefs ...although it does not require equal air-time to be given to all shades of belief or conviction'.

RE Today would make any necessary changes to the agreed syllabus.

RE Teacher Training

There had been an increase in the numbers applying to train as RE teachers following the RECs 'Beyond the Ordinary' campaign.

548 Feedback from Members

A report was tabled from Yvonne Stollard which gave details of:

549 Future Meeting Dates

The Worcestershire Interfaith Forum which organised its second Holocaust Memorial Day at the Hive on 27 January. The Forum was also planning a picnic at Holland House on 5 June.

Feedback was also given regarding the Conference for Jewish Representatives which took place in December 2015.

Meeting dates for 2016:

Thursday 9 June 2pm
Tuesday 4 October 2pm

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm

Chairman