

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday, 9 July 2014, 2.00 pm, Worcester Cathedral

Minutes

Present:

Venerable Tenzin Choesang (Chairman), Mr I Hopwood (Vice Chairman), John Allison, Graham Bounds, Mr C Giles, Mr R C Lunn, Norman Mills, Phil Mitchell, Christine Parker, Dr Y Stollard and Mrs L Thorne

Also attended:

489 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Boulter, Ms E Hill, Mrs T. Khawaja Dr J Lally Cllr. F Oborski Mrs S Fitzjohn, and Ms A Palmer.

The Chairman welcomed Lee Russell to the meeting as an observer.

490 Declaration of Interests

None.

491 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 February 2014

Matters Arising:

- It was agreed that progress on the new syllabus would be dealt with later in the meeting.
- Vice Chairmen, Membership, and the Constitution would be dealt with at the next meeting on 7 October.
- Barry Newton briefly explained that the Learning and Achievement Section of Children's Services at the County Council was at a pre-procurement stage. An external provider would be appointed from April 2015.
- The Chairman had met a Primary teacher who hoped to gain funding from the Westhill Awards to run an event for Parents and Children. The event would have representatives of different faiths and would be aimed at Children in the last year of Primary Schools. As parts of Worcestershire have a three tier system Members felt it was important for the event to be clear which age range it was aiming at. The Chairman would clarify and follow up with the teacher.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of 25

February 2014 were confirmed to be a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**492 How the
Cathedral
Supports
Religious
Education**

The Chairman introduced Sue Adeney to the meeting. She was the Education Officer at Worcester Cathedral.

Sue explained that she had been employed as a teacher, and gradually it became necessary for the cathedral to have an Education Officer. In the near future a dedicated Education Space was being created in the crypt of the cathedral. She introduced Sarah Hayward who was her assistant at the cathedral. Together they did not quite make up a full time post.

The basis of the work delivered at the cathedral was based on Learning in the Classroom but was adapted to work with the unique situation of the cathedral.

The Cathedral had lots to offer schools. It was the Mother Church of the Diocese and had the infrastructure to be able to cope with school visits, including considerations such as toilets and space for lunches, as well as being able to offer a good educational infrastructure.

Schools expected to see religious services, have a tour of the cathedral, see historical and religious artefacts and not be charged for the visit.

In fact schools would get a curriculum focussed visit in safe environment which would inspire awe and wonder in the students. There would be trained and experienced leaders who tailor made visits to suit schools. There were many activities which were good value for the 'Learning outside the classroom' part of the curriculum. The Cathedral tried to keep visits down to a cost of £5 per head. Special activities were available and included role play with the Bible which included items such as a surplice or a candle. The aim was to make the visit memorable and fun as well as educational.

At present between 6-8,000 Children take part in visits to the Cathedral. 50% of those from Primary School and 50% Secondary Schools.

RESOLVED: that Sue Adeney be thanked for allowing SACRE to visit the Cathedral, arranging a tour of the Cathedral for SACRE members, and a presentation explaining how the Cathedral supports Religious Education.

**493 Feedback from
Conferences**

Stephen Pett explained that three secondary network meetings had taken place, as well as Primary, Secondary and Special Schools conferences and a Year 10 RE Day. He felt that the network meetings had been successful and useful for those who had attended but unfortunately not many teachers had attended.

Network Meetings

Norman Mills attended the network meeting at Wolverley

and was very impressed with the teachers from the School. Kerry Poole subsequently won the Silver Teacher of the Year Award. He felt that all the teachers were keen to network and were interested in the materials that Stephen could provide.

Chris Giles explained that the network meeting at South Bromsgrove led to teachers sharing information on useful websites as well as other ideas. He felt that such meetings helped to build confidence for teachers.

Stephen noted that he was looking to see who would be able to host network meetings for next year. The meetings were held at 4.00 – 5.30 on Mondays which caused some discussion as to whether that was too close to the end time of school to allow teachers to attend and that Mondays were often the day when staff meetings were held. However there was an acknowledgement that some teachers were reluctant to attend extra meetings on top of their normal work so arranging network meetings to follow closely on to school time was helpful to some teachers and Stephen pointed out that he had offered a choice of days and the school themselves chose a Monday.

There was some discussion about whether SACRE members could help more with spreading information about the network meetings and conferences. The information could be sent to the Head of RE in secondary schools but often such a position did not exist in Primary or First schools. A Member of SACRE who was a Head of a Primary School said that emails were the best way to communicate with schools, rather than phone calls or visits because staff were likely to be teaching.

Some members suggested that they could find people who would be willing to help spread the information to schools but all members did not agree that this would be a useful solution and one member stated that he objected to the idea of SACRE members bringing in other volunteers. The Chairman asked Members to let her know if they were willing to help to contact schools to advertise network meetings and conferences, she would then pass their details on to Stephen.

It was pointed out that it took time in Herefordshire for attendance at the conferences to increase and the good feedback received from the recent events would certainly help to advertise future events.

Year 10 RE Day - The Hive hosted the RE Day for students. The Chairman explained that the day had gone

well. Students from different schools were mixed at each table and teachers were kept separate. Pupils were asked to take their learning and information back to their schools and bring back feedback to SACRE.

Primary Conference – The Vice-Chairman attended this conference and found attendees were positive and enthusiastic.

Special Schools Conference – This took place at a special school in Herefordshire. The Chairman led some meditations which went down well with the attendees.

Three Counties Secondary Conference – Stephen reported that 10 teachers from Worcestershire attended and 95% of all attendees marked the value of the conference as excellent.

It was proposed that a primary and secondary conference be organised for next year, jointly with Herefordshire SACRE, subject to the needs of the Agreed Syllabus launch.

RESOLVED that

- a) the information about the conferences be noted,
- b) A Primary and secondary conference be organised for 2014/15, subject to the requirements of a syllabus launch,
- c) Feedback from pupils who attended the Year 10 RE day to be followed up by the Chairman.

494 SACRE Finances

Barry Newton explained that SACRE had been allocated £7,200 which was the estimated figure that would be needed for the new syllabus and £5,000 for RE Today for the advisor.

The budget for next year allowed for:

- RE Today (Stephen Pett) to continue to act as Advisor to SACRE for 3 meetings;
- to hold a Primary Conference, a Secondary Conference and 3 network meetings organised by RE Today,
- The production of an Agreed Syllabus Conference. Which at the previous meeting had been agreed that due to limited resources needed to be by way of purchasing an 'off the shelf' version from RE Today.

Any other activities would need to be funded from alternative sources.

The Chairman queried whether SACRE could ask the County Council for more funding. However it was explained that the Vice Chairman had already lobbied Liz Eyre the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and as budget cuts were being felt across the Council it was unlikely that any further money would be available.

The Vice Chairman explained that he was doing his best to find other sources of funding.

Stephen explained that the Cullum St Gabriel Trust had funding available with projects being considered four times a year. The Trust were keen on projects that would have an impact in schools. The Chairman suggested that with extra money Stephen could provide training on going into schools to provide sessions for representatives of different faiths. She requested that someone help her with the application forms and Lindsay Thorne volunteered.

Lindsay suggested that the SACRE needed a development plan which would involve compiling a profile for SACRE and the role of members. She felt that grants would not be awarded to a SACRE unless a development plan was in place which gave a clear aim and purpose for the Advisory Council. Stephen agreed to provide examples of other development plans as well as a sample constitution for the next meeting.

Members discussed whether Worcestershire should consider the Gloucestershire model whereby there are 2 levels of the Advisory Council and a strategy group prepares ideas ahead of main meetings. Alternatively ideas could be shared by email prior to meetings. It was suggested that small working groups could be formed around particular projects. The Chairman, Phil Mitchell and Lindsay Thorne agreed that they would form a group to consider the new constitution. Although there may be difficulties for some members to be able to find extra time to meet for sub-committee meetings. The Chairman felt that she would want to be involved with all the meetings although it was pointed out that this would not be necessary as sub-groups would notify the Chairman and other members of their work.

RESOLVED:

**495 National RE
News update**

- a) **The funding level for SACRE for 2014/15 be noted and**
- b) **The ideas of strategy groups and sub-committees be discussed further at the next meeting along with the constitution.**

Stephen gave a brief update about national RE News.

- Stephen explained that the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) and The Religious Education Council (REC) were pleased that the Department of Education had accepted that GCSE and A Level RE should be reformed at the same time as EBacc subjects and that the full RE course would count as one of the best eight subjects that schools could be measured on,
- The numbers taking the RE Short Course had decreased by a half since 2012, which means there were around 60,000 less pupils taking RE which would have an impact on the number of people moving onto A level and onwards,
- The Expert Advisory Groups for RE met in May to look at how to support the development of RE resources following the findings of the REC Review,
- Links were supplied to the most recent twitter chats,
- The 5th NATRE teacher survey was now available on line.

RESOLVED that this update be noted.

**496 New Agreed
Syllabus 2015**

Stephen Pett stated that there was not yet anything to report about the Agreed Syllabus. RE Today had three days booked in August to start work and the feedback received from Teachers will go into those initial discussions.

Lots of resources would be available to support the syllabus which could be available for distribution at the launch. Schemes of work would be available for schools to purchase if they wish to do so.

A first draft would hopefully be available for the Primary network meetings at the end of September. SACRE members would be able to see that draft and provide feedback. An Agreed Syllabus Conference would be held for an hour prior to the October and Spring meetings of SACRE to review the material being produced by RE Today. At the Spring 2015 meeting the syllabus will need to be approved by SACRE and the Local Authority.

Stephen requested that anyone who was able to contribute or be involved in producing appendices on individual religions should let him know.

When asked a question about how the syllabus would be suitable for both two and three tier systems Stephen explained that although the syllabus could not be specific as it was an off the shelf version it would need to be flexible enough to meet the needs of different systems. Input from teachers in Worcestershire would help to make the syllabus more applicable to Worcestershire.

The Chairman asked if a rolling update would be available in future, although there were fears that a rolling update may mean there was less scope for input by the local community. It was suggested that a yearly conference could be held to assess whether the syllabus was still up to date or whether updates were needed. The provision of updates had not yet been fully considered by RE Today but would be discussed over the summer. A question was raised as to whether there should be a parent representative provide feedback on the draft syllabus.

RESOLVED that

- a) **Any members who were able to contribute to the appendices on individual faiths to contact Stephen,**
- b) **Initial work on the syllabus be distributed prior to the Agreed Syllabus Conference (being held before the SACRE meeting on 7 October) to allow Members to consider the syllabus and to contribute comments.**

497 Feedback from Members

None.

498 Any Other Business

None.

499 Dates of Future Meetings

Future meetings dates 2014:

Tuesday 7 October 2014

- 1.00-2.00 Agreed Syllabus Conference
- 2.00-4.00 SACRE meeting

The meeting ended at

Chairman