

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday, 24 February 2021, On-line only - 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Mr Robin Lunn (Chairman), Mrs Charlotte Betteridge, Mr Graham Bounds, Ms Danielle Evans, Mr Chris Giles, Ms Ellie Hill, Rev. Duncan Hutchison, Mr Matthew Jenkins, Mrs Tasnim Khawaja, Mr Jatinder Loyal, Mrs Christine Parker, Mr Ken Pollock and Dr Yvonne Stollard.

Also attended:

Nikki Jones and Stephen Pett.

701 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

The Chairman welcomed Duncan Hutchison to his first SACRE meeting. Duncan was the new Church of England Representative.

Duncan explained that he was the Education Advisor for the Diocese of Worcester; he advised Church Schools on RE, SIAMS and collective worship. He was also an ordained Member of the Clergy for the Diocese of Gloucester, where he served in a curacy.

There was an apology for absence from Ade Couper.

Both Charlotte Betteridge and Chris Giles gave apologies for that they would need to leave the meeting around 3.00pm.

702 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be an accurate record and would be signed by the Chairman.

703 Feedback from the Syllabus Launch

The Chairman thanked Stephen Pett and those who organised the Syllabus Launch. He had attended to give some introductory comments and had found the afternoon helpful and enjoyable. He hoped the teachers who attended were able to get a lot out of it.

After various postponements, the Syllabus Launch was finally held online on the afternoon of 27 January; although Worcestershire Schools had been able to access the Syllabus since June 2020. Teachers representing 51 schools attended and feedback had been positive.

704 Plans for Teacher

There would normally be a summer conference for schools and it had been hoped that there could be a

Support 2021

Regional Conference for Primary Schools; unfortunately it was looking as though that would be difficult. Herefordshire had a date of 15 June for their conference and it was suggested that the conference should become a joint Herefordshire and Worcestershire one. Members agreed that the suggested conference had a broad range of appeal and a joint conference would be the best option.

For a Secondary Conference Gloucestershire had invited Worcestershire and Herefordshire to take part in their conference and hold a 'Three Counties' conference on 25 June. There would be the opportunity to make the conference more local in parts, especially for the TeachMeet section at the end.

Various points were clarified:

- As the conferences would be useful for the Professional Development of SACRE Members it was confirmed that they would be able to attend at no cost, although they were asked to fill in a booking form to help keep track numbers.
- A comment was made in regard to the session on Anti-racist RE, that it was an important but perhaps contentious issue. It was hoped that the content could be fed back to SACRE as it was useful to understand how such issues were being presented to teachers
- Members thought that having a price per school rather than per attendee was a good idea as it would encourage more than one teacher from a school to attend. It was agreed that a similar arrangement could be made for university students. There were some benefits to doing online sessions as costs would not be increased by having additional attendees.

It had previously been proposed that a Special School Conference be held at the end of February 2021, as a joint conference with Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. This had been postponed due to the current workload of schools who were making arrangements for the return of pupils. It was hoped that some support for special schools could be put in place later in the year.

The Diocese were currently considering their offer to support Church Schools; courses on creative RE and imaginative prayer had been organised and courses on spirituality and well-being were being developed.

The University were continuing with undergraduate modules online. Schools had been incredible in continuing to take students on placements. A session had taken place with student teachers and religious representatives around LGBTQ+ issues and students had been involved in the Ubuntu project and written items for a magazine.

RESOLVED: that SACRE

- a) **agreed that the Primary conference should be a joint one with Herefordshire held on 15 June; and**
- b) **that the secondary conference should be a joint conference with Gloucestershire and Herefordshire held on 25 June.**

705 The Three Year Plan

The previous development plan had been revamped and would now run for the next three years. Members of SACRE were asked if they wished to add anything. There was the on-going challenge of monitoring due to the limited amount of information that was available however Ofsted did now do some monitoring of RE and SMSC. The summer conference could be an opportunity to see how the new syllabus was being used and an online survey could be used to gain feedback. It was appreciated that schools had been under a lot of pressure this year with COVID and it was unclear at present how well schools had introduced the new syllabus.

There was query about what framework would be used to monitor what good looked like and whether an evaluation annex would be useful? It was agreed that some specific questions could be asked about how well the syllabus had helped with teaching and learning. The survey could be circulated to SACRE members before the conference for comments. It was noted that it was proving more difficult to capture feedback after online events rather than in person and it was suggested that teachers were asked for their opinion at hub meetings.

It was believed that SACRE already did a large amount of what was listed in the plan and with regard to community and faith visits some groups were thinking of a way of having videos or virtual tours.

706 National RE Update

Stephen noted the details of various national updates. Details and links were in the agenda. They included:

- Faith Engagement Review
- Subject knowledge enhancement courses
- Evaluating the Understanding Christianity

707 Increasing Engagement in RE during Lockdown

Resource national impact report which supports the delivery of the syllabus.

- NATRE and RE Today were providing free resources to schools
- Good News for Everyone (formerly known as Gideons) had received training from Lat Blaylock about appropriate ways to deliver their message in schools.
- TRS-UK have been putting together films about people who had studied RE at University and what careers they had gone into, showing the value of a degree in RE.

It was recognised that engaging students in online learning and getting feedback was difficult. Chris Giles gave a presentation about some of the tools which could be used to engage pupils in online learning as there was a lot of passive engagement and with older students the use of cameras was encouraged so engagement could be more easily assessed.

Well-being – asking students how they are coping, perhaps asking for responses in the chat. Encouraging them to keep connected to people, being active, taking notice of what is happening, learning new things and trying to give something back.

Questioning - Asking open questions. Speak one to one even with the whole class, allow time for uncertainty and difference of opinion and allow students to direct the way the discussion goes.

Memory techniques – Retrieval practice such as quizzes and allow discussion on spectrum of views. Use the chat to engage all students rather than ask questions which just allow for a few to respond and give time for responses.

Jatinder Loyal explained that as Sikh Saturday and Sunday schools for learning Punjabi were not currently possible in person, students were asked for examples of selfless service in the community, eg helping with soup kitchens or acts of random kindness such as checking on neighbours. A practical response to the situation helps people to talk and helps with mental health.

Tasnim Khawaja gave an example of how she continued to engage with students but admitted that knowledge of IT had been a challenge and felt that some SACRE members needed further training. She felt the chance to go into schools from your own home was a wonderful

708 Feedback from Members

opportunity but was a different skill to teaching in person.

Yvonne Stollard reported that the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue was updating an existing video as visits were not currently possible and she was working on an animated powerpoint with narration. Members were asked if they thought a donation of £25 for the use of the video was reasonable. Once Members were assured there would be no other sort of income it was thought to be a reasonable amount as schools would not have to pay for coaches and other costs of a physical visit. The fee would also give access to a zoom question and answer session and a range of other resources.

The Gurdwara was also updating a video in lieu of visits.

Jatinder Loyal explained that Worcestershire Interfaith Forum were carrying on work remotely and other faith reps or students would be welcome to join any sessions. The last session had been run by Sean Delenti session on Faith and sexuality. Previous events had been on climate change, education and crime. SACRE members would be welcome.

Nikki Jones reported that Head Teacher briefings had been set up and schools were currently very busy preparing for the return of pupils on 8 March. Secondary schools were sorting out the logistics of testing and were considering staggered returns to allow year groups to be tested and then stay in school. They were allowed to bring in some groups prior to 8 March for testing. Schools were being asked what extra staff they may need for testing. There were concerns over whether all pupils would be required to wear masks throughout the day.

709 Any Other Business

None

710 Future Meeting Dates

Thursday 17 June 2021
Thursday 14 October 2021

All to start at 2pm. Venues to be confirmed

The meeting ended at 3.10pm

Chairman