

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday, 26 November 2014, 2.00 pm, County Hall

Minutes

Present:

Venerable Tenzin Choesang (Chairman), Mr I Hopwood (Vice Chairman), John Allison, Stephanie Boulter, Dr J Lally, Mr R C Lunn, Norman Mills, Phil Mitchell, Christine Parker and Mrs L Thorne

Also attended:

Barry Newton and Stephen Pett

500 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Sue Fitzjohn, Chris Giles, Fran Oborski, Alex Hooper, Ellie Hill and Yvonne Stollard.

The Chairman welcomed two new members as Church of England representatives.

Tracy Lister was the RE Co-ordinator from Whittington Primary School and Kerry Poole was an Assistant Head Teacher from Wolverley High School. Kerry had been awarded the National Secondary School teacher of the year for RE.

501 Declaration of Interests

None

502 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9 July 2014 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

503 SACRE Constitution

The Chairman asked members if they had any comments on the draft constitution. It was clarified that the membership list would remain as listed in the 2012 constitution which was based on the faiths of the population of Worcestershire rather than use the suggested new version

It had been agreed at the meeting in July that a second Vice-Chairman should be appointed half way through the two year term of the Vice-Chairman to avoid a situation when a Chairman and Vice-Chairman could potentially leave at the same time. A second Vice-Chairman would allow for continuity and should ideally be from a different group to the other Vice Chairman.

Lindsay Thorne was nominated and seconded to become

the second Vice Chairman. The Chairman asked Lindsay to say something about herself. Lindsay responded that it was the Ba'hai way not to canvas for support but that people should be known by their work, their loyalty and their well-trained mind. She did mention that she was an ex Deputy Head of a special school, was currently an Art and Craft Teacher and Trustee of Pershore Youth Centre. She was also a member of the Religious Education Council.

Lindsay left the room while the nomination was discussed. There was unanimous support for the appointment with Norman Mills commenting that he had attended an enjoyable Ba'hai event in Pershore which Lindsay had helped to organise and he had been impressed by her work for Interfaith Week.

Lindsay Thorne was therefore duly appointed as the second Vice Chairman for Worcestershire SACRE.

The Chairman asked the Council to consider whether they should co-opt a youth member onto the SACRE. It was felt that it would be difficult for a sixth former to be able to attend meetings and that someone attending University would gain more from the experience as well as being more likely to be able to attend the meetings.

It was agreed that the Chairman should put the suggestion to Ellie Hill who was in charge of Primary PGCE and would soon be starting to run secondary PGCEs. Ellie would then be able to help in suggesting ways to appoint a young person.

504 Finances

The SACRE budget was currently fully committed paying for the SACRE Advisor and the production of the Approved Syllabus. If the funding were available it would be ideal to contribute to the two primary conferences and the secondary conference which were being organised to launch the syllabus. Stephen explained that Hereford SACRE had discussed bringing forward the release of their next syllabus and were considering opting for the RE Today syllabus. If both Councils were to adopt the same RE Today Syllabus it may be possible for Worcestershire to hold a joint syllabus launch with Herefordshire.

The Chairman explained that during the last academic year a successful conference had been held for Year 10 Gifted and Talented pupils. Around 60 pupils and 7 or 8 teachers had attended. If further funding could be

505 Do we want or need strategy groups

identified the conference could be held again in 2015. The money would be required to pay for speakers and refreshments. It was suggested that the schools be charged for the conference but it was felt that would result in a poor attendance.

Members suggested various solutions. Kerry Poole suggested that Wolverley High School could be used as a venue and would possibly provide refreshments. The Chairman explained that the Co-opted member from the University had said that the University may be able to provide a room. One of the Members also felt that his Church Community fund could be approached about making a donation.

Further work would be done about investigating other sources of funding such as Westhill and Cullum St Gabriels.

It was agreed that as resources were limited there was little point in having permanent strategy groups but groups could be formed for a limited time, for a specific purpose or to achieve a particular task.

Some members felt that Stephen Pett as Advisor should be a member of each strategy group but others disagreed and felt that Stephen should be left to concentrate on writing the Syllabus.

The Council felt that at the present time two strategy groups would be useful. One group was needed to look at the syllabus and help with any curriculum planning, feedback on the draft syllabus and planning the launch. Stephen's input and professional lead would be required for this group but other members could carry on with work but take the lead from Stephen as necessary. Secondly a group could investigate any possible additional funding options.

Members who wished to be involved with the syllabus strategy group were The Chairman, Tracy Lister, Kerry Poole, Stephanie Boulter, John Allison, Lindsay Thorne and Christine Parker. It was clarified that all voluntary controlled schools would be required to follow the Agreed Syllabus, while Academies and Voluntary Aided schools could choose whether they followed their own syllabus or followed the Worcestershire one. Church of England schools were encouraged to use the Worcestershire syllabus but Catholic Schools used their own syllabus.

Members who wished to help with the funding sub group

**506 National RE
News update**

were Ian Hopwood, Norman Mills and Lindsay Thorne.

Stephen Pett reported on the national RE News. The increase in numbers taking Religious Studies A Level was greater than in any other arts, humanities or social science subject, however the numbers taking the GCSE short course had fallen dramatically.

There had been a Central Government Cabinet discussion about how many subjects should be studied for the new GCSE and A Level RE courses. There was now the requirement to study 2 subjects. Draft criteria had been released with the consultation ending on 26 December. Once the criteria had been signed off, specifications would be produced for teaching from September 2016.

Ofsted inspections now had an increased interest in SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural). 'British values' had been inserted into the Ofsted handbook and schools needed to show they were preparing pupils for British life. Schools should therefore realise that keeping RE courses could help them meet their SMSC responsibilities.

Members were informed that the police were visiting schools to discuss the 'Prevent' anti-terrorism strategy which was another way that schools were offering SMSC. Interfaith week was being extended and would carry on until January and was teaching understanding and respect for others and other faiths. At Whittington Primary School they had a Diversity Street as part of Interfaith week.

The Chairman agreed to invite the Manager of the local Prevent Team to attend a future SACRE meeting.

**507 Church of
England
Schools
Inspections**

Phil Mitchell gave a presentation about Church of England Inspections. A large percentage of pupils were taught in church schools and it was recognised, with the help of the Way Ahead report, that their teaching had to show more Christian distinctiveness. They also had to be inclusive and effective. It was not enough for schools to be tolerant and teach Christian Values but they needed to support Children at all levels and see that they were achieving.

Inspections showed that schools were values rich but they had to show the impact of the values on the

children. During inspections inspectors met children and parents, observed RE lessons to see if there were clear objectives and whether learners were engaged, as well as checking that what they were learning included an increased emphasis on Christianity. The inspections also looked at how children were involved in leading worship and what part they played in collective worship.

508 What SACRE members can bring to the Advisory Council and to Worcestershire Schools

Deferred to the next meeting

509 Feedback from Members

None

510 Any Other Business

None

511 Future Meeting Dates

Meeting dates for 2015. To be held at 2.00pm at County Hall

Wednesday 18 March
Wednesday 10 June
Wednesday 21 October

The meeting ended at 4.15pm.

Chairman