

## Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

### Thursday, 15 October 2020, Online only - 2.00 pm

#### Minutes

#### Present:

Mr Robin Lunn, Chairman, Mr Graham Bounds, Ms Kate Cope, Mr Ade Couper, Mr Chris Giles, Mr Matthew Jenkins, Mrs Tasnim Khawaja, Mrs Tracy Lister, Mr Jatinder Loyal, Mrs Christine Parker, Mr Ken Pollock and Mrs Lindsay Thorne

#### Also attended:

Mr Stephen Pett, RE Today - Adviser to SACRE  
Ms Nikki Jones – School Improvement Lead,  
Worcestershire Children First

#### 689 Position of Chairman and Membership

The Clerk outlined that the Chairman Lindsay Thorne had requested to step down from the Chair due to other commitments. Vice Chairman Robin Lunn had agreed to act as Chairman for the meeting. It was proposed that Robin Lunn remained as Chairman until after the County Council elections in May 2021 and then an election of a SACRE Chairman and Vice-Chairman would take place at the June meeting so that the process returned to being back in line with the Constitution. Members agreed with this suggestion, so Robin Lunn took the Chair and Lindsay Thorne became Vice Chairman.

#### 690 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Danielle Evans, Ellie Hill, Tracey Lister and Yvonne Stollard. Tracey Lister no longer represented the Diocese as an RE Advisor so had stepped down from SACRE.

The Chairman welcomed Nichola Jones to the meeting as the new representative from Worcestershire Children First. Nikki explained that she was a School Improvement Advisor.

#### 691 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting.

The Chairman wished to highlight a matter arising from the minutes: minute 685, paragraph 3; whether schools were teaching sufficient RE.

Stephen Pett explained that a complaint had been made by parents in another part of the country, that an academy had failed to comply with its Funding Agreement regarding the provision of RE. The school

**692 Syllabus launch and encouraging schools to register for access to syllabus**

failed to uphold the complaint so the parents complained to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) who also failed to uphold the complaint. Ofsted declared the complaint outside its remit. NATRE contacted the ESFA and broadened the scope to the entire Academy Trust and the complaint was then upheld and the Trust revised their RE provision. The initial school in question now teaches RE as a discrete and distinct subject, rather than being part of the Life Skills programme.

Due to Covid-19 the Syllabus launch scheduled for June 2020 had been postponed, initially to 9 November but now to 14 January. The Syllabus had been made available online and schools could request a password for access to the syllabus as well as being able to download a webinar about the Syllabus. To date 163 Worcestershire schools had applied for the password so around 80 schools still needed to be reached.

Nikki Jones informed SACRE that an Education and Early Help bulletin went to schools at least weekly and details of the online conference for January would be included and details would also be included in future editions. School Improvement Advisors would be asked to pass on the information to schools and the Department for Education would be informed.

Nikki explained that as the number of positive Covid cases increased in Worcestershire, Head Teachers were very busy managing their schools and reacting to any positive cases. This meant that it was more sensible to move the conference to be held in January. On 26 November there would be a Primary School Heads meeting, and Stephen would be invited to attend this meeting to talk about the Syllabus and encourage schools to attend the conference. Kate Cope said she would pass the details of the conference to her network of teachers.

The Conference would be for Primary, and First and Middle Schools. There would be a small fee for each school and a recording would be made available afterwards. The conference would consist of a long afternoon and include three sessions about the intent of the new syllabus, implementing it and the impact it would have. Members suggested that the Interfaith Forum would be valuable to have at the conference.

A secondary conference was being organised by Chris Giles for next summer.

**693 Local NATRE  
Groups in  
Worcestershire  
and West  
Midlands**

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) A conference covering the use of the syllabus would be arranged for January 2021.
- b) Stephen Pett would attend the Primary School Heads meeting to speak about the syllabus and the conference
- c) Details of the syllabus and conference would be distributed through the Education and Early bulletin

*Note - Following the meeting the date of the conference was changed to 27 January, due to a Diocese event being run on the original date in January.*

Chris Giles gave an update on the Local NATRE groups. There had been a meeting the previous week and one earlier in the summer term. The next meeting would be held on 11 February from 4.00-5.00pm and would give RE Teachers the opportunity to share ideas and resources. There were also plans for there to be some joint meetings with the Rivers Multi-Academy Trust. Part of his role as Regional Ambassador was to set up more local groups and enable them to become self-sustaining.

The secondary conference scheduled for November had been cancelled due to Covid but it had been re-arranged for next summer.

Kate Cope explained that there had been two different Diocese groups meeting last year, one in Bromsgrove and one in Malvern. The Malvern group hoped to continue but had not yet met this year.

Chris mentioned various faiths that were happy to host visits from schools or provide speakers to come into schools, including the Mosque at Tallow Hill in Worcester and Worcester Cathedral. Daniel Parnell, Education Officer at the Cathedral provided downloadable resources. The list of contacts would be made available to SACRE members.

**RESOLVED that this update was noted.**

**694 Future Plans**

The County Council had agreed that the agreement with RE Today to supply an Advisor to SACRE would continue for a further three years. Stephen proposed that that the three-year plan which had originally covered 2017-2020 should be updated.

The original plan had covered:

1. Supporting and monitoring teaching and learning in RE
2. Monitoring and review of the Syllabus
3. Partnership working
4. Collective worship
5. Monitoring the contribution of SACRE to SMSC.

SACRE members agreed that an updated three year plan was a good idea.

Members were asked to send ideas for what should be included in the plan to Stephen by Christmas so that a draft plan could be considered at the next meeting.

The possibility of an online survey to schools was discussed. It was decided that it would be best to send a survey to schools in the summer term to check that the syllabus was being used. Workforce data should be part of monitoring schools and once that had been considered then SACRE could decide how to proceed if there were any schools who did not appear to teaching a sufficient amount of RE.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) **A draft three year plan would be presented at the next meeting**
- b) **Schools would be sent a survey in the summer terms once schools had been given the chance to attend the conference and implement the use of the Syllabus**

**695 National RE Update**

Stephen Pett brought various items of news to SACREs attention and suggested that although this information was produced for SACRE, it could also be sent to schools in the bulletin.

- NATREs Spirited Arts competition proved popular during lockdown and had received over 30,000 entries
- Lat Blaylock had worked with teachers and produced resources for Black Lives Matter
- Exams – GCSE: Following a previous decline in the number taking the course, numbers are now improved. GCSE exams for next year have been pushed back by 3 weeks following the disruption to schooling from covid
- There was some concern that in 2021 SATs were due to take place at the same time as Eid-ul-Fitr. Guidance had been issued by the DfE about rearranging tests for pupils
- The £9,000 bursary which had been available for RE teachers has been dropped by the Government. Arts and humanities grants had also

been stopped.

- Strictly RE would take place online at the end of January 2021

It was agreed that a letter could be sent out to schools giving details from the SACRE update.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) This update be noted; and**
- b) Stephen Pett to adjust update for schools early in Spring term.**

**696 How Schools will celebrate Christmas with current restrictions**

The Chairman queried how schools would be planning to celebrate Christmas with the current restrictions.

Chris Giles explained that assemblies were being held online and various performances were being planned which would involve instrumental solos rather than group performances. Dance would also work individually. It was suggested that singing could be done outside if it was socially distanced.

It was pointed out that it was not just Christmas but other celebrations such as Divali and Eid. Teachers were coming up with different ways of celebrating, for example some harvest festivals were celebrated in bubbles and activities were filmed so they could be shared with other groups afterwards.

**697 The Viability of a Twitter Account for SACRE**

Chris Giles asked members of SACRE what they thought about having a twitter account for SACRE. Other groups had a twitter account such as RE Chat UK and it could be used to share information about courses or resources. It could be useful for professional development for teachers and although the benefits may not be huge it could be argued that it was important for SACRE to have a voice.

There was some discussion around whether twitter was a better platform than facebook. It was felt that twitter was picked up more and the format was more concise.

**RESOLVED that SACRE Members supported the idea of a Twitter account for SACRE and that Chris Giles would set it up for a trial run to see if it was a useful tool.**

**698 Feedback from Members**

One Member hoped that there had been some entries in the Spirited Arts Competition from a humanist as well as a religious point of view.

The representatives of different faiths and communities

such as the Ba'hais, Sikhs and Quakers reported that they had managed to meet online during lockdown and had held various regional meetings or open mic nights.

A video had been produced about how Sikhs coped with lockdown and daily deliveries had taken place to vulnerable people within the communities.

Worcestershire Interfaith Forum had provided help and support to faith communities and had helped schools with teaching online.

**699 Any Other Business**

None

**700 Future Meeting Dates**

Future meeting dates were:

Wednesday 24 February 2021

Thursday 17 June 2021

Thursday 14 October 2020

All at 2pm. Venues to be notified.

The meeting ended at 3.15pm

Chairman .....