

## **Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious**

### **Education**

#### **County Hall, Worcester**

**Thursday, 14 October 2021, 2.00 pm**

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#### **Present:**

Cllr. Mel Allcott (Chair), Cllr. Matthew Jenkins (Vice -Chairman), Mr Graham Bounds, Ms Danielle Evans, Mr Chris Giles, Mr Jatinder Loyal and Cllr. Emma Marshall.

#### **Also attended:**

Nicola Jones, Assistant Director for Education Quality and Improvement,  
Worcestershire Children First  
Stephen Pett, RE Today, Advisor to SACRE  
Deborah Dale, Community Engagement Officer

#### **711 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

In the absence of a Chairman Nicola Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting. This was the first formal SACRE meeting since the County Council elections in May so the new County Councillors were welcomed to their first SACRE meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Charlotte Betteridge, Ellie Hill, Duncan Hutchinson, Christine Parker, Yvonne Stollard and Tasnim Khawaja.

Both Jatinderpal Loyal and Matt Jenkins gave apologies that they would need to leave the meeting around 3.15pm.

#### **712 Chairman**

County Councillor Mel Allcott was nominated for Chairman. This was agreed by attending members of SACRE.

#### **713 Vice-Chairman**

County Councillor Mel Allcott then nominated County Councillor Matt Jenkins as Vice Chairman.

This was seconded by Jatinderpal Loyal and agreed by the attending members of SACRE.

## **714 Confirmation of the Minutes**

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

## **715 Support for Teachers**

Stephen Pett updated SACRE on the Primary conference which took place in the summer. 109 people had attended and had made very positive comments on the event.

On-line attendance had also been good with a record number of attendees for the joint event with Herefordshire. It was felt that on-line events were easy to arrange due to no travelling or difficulties finding suitable venues.

There were 22 attendees for the secondary conference and 90% of those who attended had rated the event as good.

SACRE were informed of a selection of topics for the proposed primary conference on 22 June 2022, to support classroom teachers to keep up to date with current thinking in RE. Comments were invited from SACRE on this point.

A response was put forward that Primary and Secondary Teachers were struggling with the subject of religion with some teachers discussing culture and tradition rather than faith. It was felt that the faith content of the course taught needed to be checked through before being delivered and if questions were raised by teachers, they should know who was available to help them.

Mel Allcott requested Stephen Pett put a programme together for the spring meeting. Stephen agreed to proceed with the programme and circulate information through the bulletin and contacts and would confirm the final programme.

It was agreed that people had mixed feelings about face to face or on-line events as there was still some anxiety about attending events in person. It was suggested that hybrid meetings could be an option especially for teachers who were unable to get time out of class to attend in person.

There was consensus from SACRE members that hybrid meetings should be considered, and Stephen agreed he would ask for feedback on this when the programme was circulated, with any responses shared with SACRE.

Jatinderpal Loyal commented that Dr Katherine Lack was doing work on scriptural reading and would pick up discussions on the A level syllabus outside of the meeting.

Stephen confirmed that Catherine Atkinson at Rivers C of E Academy trust had set up 3 dates for the Rivers Teaching Alliance which were 14 October 2020, 17 March 2022 and 9 June 2022.

**RESOLVED that SACRE receive an update on hybrid meetings at the next meeting.**

## 716 Agreed Syllabus Survey

Stephen Pett confirmed this was a follow up survey and SACRE members were asked to go through it and feedback any comments.

Jatinder Loyal suggested that to increase response rates the survey could be circulated to attendees from the conference. Stephen Pett agreed to check on GDPR status to see if this was possible and consider the best way to circulate the survey.

**RESOLVED: that SACRE agreed to feed back with suggestions and comments on the survey.**

## 717 National Exam Data

SACRE members were shown some information about GCSE and A level exam results. The information was discussed; it was recognised that with exams cancelled due to COVID it was not possible to have more detailed information broken down by school, as would normally be available.

The numbers taking RE courses appeared to be going down in Worcestershire but the group agreed this was not surprising. Since changes to the syllabus were introduced in 2016, most secondary schools had religious studies as an option at GCSE level.

It was believed that in regard to options, in Worcestershire there was a big push on mainstream subjects but little emphasis on religious education.

The Teacher representative felt that RE teachers needed to articulate how RE linked to careers as well as linking with other A levels and GCSEs. There was some good information available on-line which could be used at parent's evenings to promote RE.

When asked for confirmation on who decided on the amount of RE taught in a school and if there were rules and regulations for the amount of RE taught in schools it was confirmed that the Department of Education was responsible and that all schools should have RE as a core subject. Head Teachers were responsible for ensuring the legal obligation for RE was fulfilled.

Members believed that this was something that SACRE should be chasing.

**RESOLVED: that SACRE would discuss this further at the next meeting.**

## 718 School Workforce Data

Stephen Pett confirmed that every year schools were required to complete the census and report the findings to the Department of Education who then extracted the data about what schools were doing around religious education.

SACRE had concerns that schools were not giving enough time to completing the census and not all were doing it every year. There were also difficulties with the responses as some schools put religious education under a different name such as philosophy. It was suggested that SACRE should investigate this.

There were discussions from the group as to how much SACRE could do as it was important to maintain a good working relationship with schools. In previous years some schools had been notified of their legal obligation by letter and that training was available if required.

It was suggested that schools could be reminded that not providing sufficient RE would affect Ofsted grades.

Stephen Pett confirmed there was a data study being carried out at King's College London for NASACRE on the perception of religion and world views which would include information on parental opinions of RE. A national update was available and the link would be circulated to SACRE members.

It was agreed that further work should be done on the available data and discussed at the next meeting.

### **RESOLVED that SACRE:**

- a) **Agreed that further work was needed to identify which schools are not prioritising religious education; and**
- b) **Should discuss at the next meeting what further action could be taken to encourage these schools to provide more religious education.**

## 719 Applying for Westhill/NASACRE Award

It was confirmed that some SACREs had put together proposals to apply for a grant, through Westhill Trust, to support projects.

SP confirmed £4,000 was available until the end of March 2022 and SACRE members were asked to consider projects they would want to support to enable a bid to be put forward.

### **RESOLVED that SACRE:**

- a) Provide suggestions for projects to support through this grant;  
and
- b) To bring this back to the next meeting for further discussion.

**720 National news update**

The update included information on Interfaith Week and SACRE members were encouraged to access the link on the circulated agenda papers to find out more.

It was requested that a version of the news update should be provided for schools.

**RESOLVED:** that SACRE provide a version of the national news update for schools.

**721 Feedback from Members**

Yvonne Stallard's update was read to the group and would be circulated with the minutes.

**722 Future Meeting Dates**

Chairman .....

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Yvonne Stollard

SACRE Report - Worcestershire interfaith Forum (WIFF) 14.10.21

Upcoming events:

Sunday 21st November

Mitzvah Day\* – still awaiting permission to collect items for refugees in Worcester City Centre. We are planning a collection stall outside St Andrew's Methodist Church in Pump Street from 11.00-3.00. It will be manned by a multifaith team, and we are hoping to partner with Worcester Welcomes Refugees.

\*Mitzvah Day is a Jewish-led day of social action ( <https://mitzvahday.org.uk/> )

Each year, in November, over 40,000 people around the world, come together to give our time, not money, to make a difference to the community around us.

It brings together people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds, to volunteer side-by-side, building longstanding, genuine relationships.

In the past, WIFF has organised a multi-faith team providing free refreshments to visitors, patients and staff at the Alex hospital in Redditch. For obvious reasons, we won't be doing that again this year.

Thursday 27th January

Holocaust Memorial Day 10.30-12.00. We are in the early stages of planning. It will probably be a hybrid event – online and in-person. We are partnering with the University of Worcester and Worcester City Council. We are hoping to have a Holocaust survivor, Mindu Hornick as our speaker.

Autumn 2022

We are planning a very exciting major event:

“Pilgrims of faiths: discovering shared humanity through the experience of pilgrimage”

There will be a series of activities centred around an exhibition at Worcester Cathedral demonstrating how different faith traditions approach the experience of pilgrimage. The project will focus on drawing links between shared aspects of pilgrimage as a journey of self-discovery, spiritual

awakening and greater appreciation of sites carrying significant importance for people of faith. The project will explore both the historic richness of pilgrimage traditions across different faiths and cultures and the significance of pilgrimage for society today.

The activities will include educational visits and workshops for students and local residents.

We have never undertaken such an ambitious project before, so any advice would welcome. We will be looking to appoint a curator, so please contact me know if you know anyone who may be interested.

You are all welcome to attend any of these events.