

Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

County Hall, Worcester

Tuesday, 11 October 2022, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr. Matthew Jenkins (Chairman), Mr Chris Giles, Ms Ellie Hill, Mr Jatinder Loyal, Mrs Christine Parker, Dr Yvonne Stollard.

Also attended:

Stephen Pett, Lisa Bradbury and Cllr Tracey Onslow

745 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence had been received from Mel Alcott, Charlotte Betteridge, Graham Bounds, Duncan Hutchinson, Tasnim Khawaja and Emma Marshall.

As the Chairman was absent, the Vice-Chairman Cllr Matt Jenkins took the Chair.

Cllr Tracey Onslow was welcomed to the meeting. She had been invited in her role as Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills.

746 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 8 June were agreed to be an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

An outstanding action from the last meeting was an agreement to write to Robin Walker asking for support for RE in schools. This had not happened as he was no longer Minister of State for School Standards. It was agreed that a letter could be sent to Robin Walker, as the Local MP, and also to the new Minister.

747 Feedback from Primary and Secondary Conferences 2022

Worcestershire Primary Conference – 22 June.

Stephen Pett explained that 70 teachers had attended, with some schools allowing several teachers to attend. Good feedback had been received. The SACRE members who had attended were thanked for answering questions on the day. They commented that it had been good to share their lived experience and help teachers by providing a link to the various faith communities.

Three Counties Secondary Conference – 23 June.

Only 5 Worcestershire schools had attended but the feedback had been excellent.

Chris Giles explained that he was no longer an RE Ambassador for NATRE but a Regional Hub Co-ordinator. The role would involve encouraging people to work together and input to a regional hub website.

An update regarding the new Regional Hub Co-ordinators would be provided at the next meeting.

748 Update on Courses

Two Help I'm the RE Co-ordinator courses had been organised with one already having taken place on 28 September. Only 6 primary teachers had taken part, but the feedback had been very positive. 14 schools had taken part in the Excellent RE Course.

Members agreed that it was difficult to appeal to all the relevant teachers as there were different levels of knowledge and interest and it was often difficult for small schools to release the teacher or to afford the cost of the course.

749 Update on Local Groups

The Rivers MAT organised local groups for Primary teachers and organised training courses.

Becky Davidge from the University organised secondary groups and worked with Chris Giles in contacting all secondary schools in Worcestershire along with some outside the borders of the County,.

The Diocese ran RE Hubs supporting mainly local Church of England schools and they also ran courses for RE teachers.

750 Plans for Teacher Support

Stephen Pett suggested that a primary conference be organised for May 2023. A discussion took place on the merits of an online or face to face conference. Online conferences were supported because more people attended online compared to in person conferences (apart from the 2015 syllabus launch) however members believed in person conferences were better for engaging

with people, being able to read body language and an improved learning experience.

The possible date was discussed and members felt that they did not want the Friday before the bank holiday as that was a TED day and likely to mean lots of teachers would not be able to attend. Tuesday 23 May was the likely date, to be confirmed.

Stephen agreed to put together a programme and distribute to SACRE members.

The secondary conference would be held on 22 June and be a Three Counties Conference again, likely to be at Puckrup Hall.

751 Secondary Workforce Data Survey

Chris Giles explained that he had sent a survey to secondary schools to assess how schools were using the Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus, the time given to RE and how SACRE could support schools. 17 schools had responded and the results from ten schools were shown.

The results showed:

- Half the schools were using the Agreed Syllabus
- Schools used different names for RE, and frequently the terms philosophy and ethics were included in the course title
- Most schools taught RE for around one hour a week in Key stage 3, and generally around 2 hours a week in key stage 4
- Other than Christianity the most common religion to study was Islam
- The numbers taking A level RE had fallen. Chris Giles was working with the RE Lead at Bewdley to promote A level RE; the University was running a course 'Out of this World' to show the juxtaposition between RE and Science with the aim of exciting and encouraged A level students to study RE
- Schools wished for support from SACRE with speakers and free resources. It was suggested that one way to support schools was to ensure best practice could be shared – for example how one school managed to devote 8% of teaching time to RE when most schools were not managing the recommended 5%.

The workforce data survey

This was a census carried out over a week in November asking schools for data on the amount of RE being taught. There was a problem with the fact that schools often called RE something different, so it was not being recorded as RE. The data was not reliable but could give an overview. Members agreed that there was merit in telling schools to be more accurate in the information they provided as the data was available to Ofsted and the DfE and appeared to be giving an inaccurate picture.

752 How can we monitor primary RE in Worcestershire beyond conference feedback

Stephen Pett explained that a survey which had previously been shown to SACRE members would be distributed around primary schools through Local Groups such as Rivers MAT and would be sent to teachers who had attended conferences and training organised by RE Today.

753 RE Report Card - Follow-up

This item was postponed to the next meeting.

754 SACRE Annual Reports

A draft annual report had been produced and SACRE were asked to agree to the format used. NASACRE had produced a template for annual reports using their preferred format, which would allow for easier review and comparison of annual reports, but it was not a legal requirement to use the suggested format.

It was suggested that the existing annual report could be adapted to inform schools of the work done by SACRE as the format accessible to schools. Conversely, the new format required more information regarding collective worship and it was suggested that schools would find that useful.

It was agreed that for this year the report should be submitted in the existing format and next summer the new format should be considered for the 2023 annual report.

755 National News Update

SACRE noted the news items included in the agenda.

756 Feedback from Members

Yvonne Stollard explained:

- as part of a group of Jewish SACRE representatives she would be attending a conference on World Views.
- The Board of Deputies were re-developing some resources and she had developed a virtual tour of Birmingham Progressive Synagogue. Once schools had seen the tour they were offered a 30 minute question and answer session.
- On 22 July 2022 a Plaque had been unveiled in Copenhagen Street in Worcester to commemorate Medieval Worcester's Jewish Community.
- On 27 January 2023 an event will be held at the Guildhall for Holocaust Memorial Day.

Ellie Hill updated SACRE that the University would be running its course for A level Students 'Out of this World' on 20 June 2023.

757 Future Meeting Dates

DATES 2023

- Monday 6 March, 2pm
- Thursday 8 June, 2pm
- Monday 9 October, 2pm

The meeting ended at 3.55pm

Chairman

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