

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in Committee Room 1B, County Hall, Durham on Thursday 5 March 2015 at 1.30 pm

Present:

P Welch (Chairman) In the Chair

Church of England

N Chapman and K Passmore

Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

J Bainbridge	- Methodist Church
W Gray	- Buddhism
J Kidd	- Methodist Church
J Nicholls	- Society of Friends (Quaker)
I Osborne	- Roman Catholic
Bhakti Rasa Dasa	- Hinduism
C Spencer	- Bahá'í Faith
M Stephenson	- United Reform Church
M Turner	- Islam

Teachers Associations

V Bain	- RE Curriculum Group
P Welch	- National Union of Teachers (NUT)

County Council Representatives

Councillor M Dixon

Specialist Inspector (Religious Education)

Isobel Short

1 Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting in particular M Turner who had been appointed as the Islamic representative on Durham SACRE. Everyone introduced themselves and gave a brief description of their background.

Apologies for absence were received from N Barker, S Baker, S Brown, Councillor Brookes, V Gallant, A Hartley, S Lupton, D Mowbray-Pape and J Pallister.

The Chairman advised members that S Brown had asked that SACRE consider his resignation for the reasons given. Members considered the resignation and indicated that they would like him to remain as a member of SACRE and asked that their best wishes be conveyed to him.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to items of business on the agenda.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2014, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to minute no. 1 been amended to read as follows:-

“Students from King James I Academy and Wellfield Community School attended the SACRE meeting to give members a presentation on the work undertaken on the Enquiry Project”.

4 Matters Arising

J Bainbridge suggested that the working groups meet again after Easter. The Chairman indicated that this item would be discussed in greater depth under agenda item no. 9.

The Chairman advised members that the draft annual report was ready to be considered by the working group.

He also advised members that he had written to the schools involved in the Enquiry project to thank them on behalf of SACRE.

5 Chairs Comments

The Chairman referred to the demonstration by the Pegida UK group held in Newcastle on Saturday 27 February 2015. He attended the demonstration as part of the counter demonstration group that had been set up. He advised members that approximately 3,000 people marched against the demonstration and that there were approximately 500 demonstrators.

SACRE members discussed the demonstration, in particular how it showed communities standing together.

The Chairman indicated that 2014 had been a harsh year for Religious Education but 2015 was looking better with the introduction of the bursary scheme for the recruitment of high-quality RE teachers in 2015/16.

SACRE members discussed the possibility of a Humanist to sit on Durham SACRE. It was agreed that the Chairman invite a member of the Humanist Society to come to a future SACRE meeting to talk to members.

The Chairman referred to a letter he had received from Discovery RE who are a company who sell primary schools an RE scheme of work mapped to the local

agreed syllabus. He advised members that they did not have access to Durham's Agreed Syllabus for copyright reasons.

6 RE Inspector Report

The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education presented the circulated report which was the RE Inspector Report for the Spring Term 2015 (for copy see file of minutes).

The report looked at the following:-

- Durham RE Networks
- Re Contracts
- REImprove Group
- Christianity: The Big Picture
- Enquiry Project: Phase 2
- New GCSEs in Religious Studies
- Trojan Horse Conference
- Alan's Blog
- Moving House

Members discussed the contents of the report and the Specialist Inspector for Religious Education advised members that the course on Christianity which was to be held in October 2015 would now be held in the Spring Term.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

7 Revised GCSE Content

The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education talked to members about the government's revision of the GCSE and AS/A2 in all subjects to make them more vigorous. The new arrangements would see AS and A2 levels being decoupled meaning you would need to decide on an AS or A2 qualification as you would not be able to change. The changes would commence in September 2016 with the first exam in 2018.

The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education circulated a copy of the consultation response on the reformed GCSE and A level subject content, a copy of which can be located at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform--2.

Members discussed the contents of the report and the impact of the changes in particular that they now needed to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of two religions at GCSE level.

It was suggested that this could be an area that SACRE could monitor.

Resolved:

That SACRE monitor the reformed GCSE for Religious Education.

8 SMSC Conference June 2015

The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education referred to the discussion at the last SACRE meeting on the increased emphasis on SMSC development in schools and focus on promoting British values and preparing children for life in modern Britain.

The Specialist Inspector for Religious Education wishes to provide a training opportunity for SACRE members on SMSC and British Values. She is also contributing to an SMSC workshop on spiritual development for senior school leaders on 2 October 2015 and asked SACRE members if they would be willing to come along to the workshop to talk about the work of SACRE.

Resolved:

- i) That a training event be arranged to look at SMSC and British values.
- ii) That SACRE support the SMSC conference for senior leaders.

9 Report of Working Groups

The Chairman indicated that he had written to SACRE members to seek volunteers to sit on the working groups and he had managed to allocate groups. A meeting had taken place on 28 January 2015 but unfortunately some members were unable to attend due to other commitments.

An updated copy of the structure which detailed allocations to the various working groups had been circulated to members at the meeting (for copy see file of minutes).

The External Relations Working Group had met and looked at producing a response to the letter received from Lord Nash to all SACREs which was to be discussed under agenda item no. 10.

K Passmore and N Chapman sought approval to send the response to Lord Nash following approval from the Chairman and the Specialist Inspector for Religious Education rather than in collaboration with all SACRE members due to the time scales involved. Members agreed to this and asked that they received a copy of the response for information.

10 Letter from Lord Nash to SACRE

A copy of a letter on the important role of SACREs and local authorities from Lord Nash, the Minister who is responsible for faith schools was circulated to SACRE members (for copy see file of minutes).

K Passmore went through the details of the response which the working group had drafted to Lord Nash's letter.

Resolved:

It was agreed that the working group continue with the letter of response to Lord Nash which would be sent following approval from the Chairman and the Specialist Inspector for Religious Education.

11 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of SACRE would be held on 4 June 2015.

12 Any other business

Councillor Dixon sought member's thoughts on a combined authority for SACRE.

The Chairman responded that they had worked with South Tyneside SACRE on the enquiry project and have good working relations with other SACRE's through the work that the Local Authority Specialist Inspector for RE undertakes.