

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held at the County Hall, Durham on Thursday 9 June 2011.

Present:

J Bainbridge in the Chair

1. Church of England

Canon L Burton, J Katsambis and D Mowbray-Pape

2. Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

Roman Catholic

I Osborne

Methodist Church

J Bainbridge and J Kidd

Assemblies of God

S Brown

Buddhism

W Gray

Bahá'í Faith

C Spencer

3. Teachers Associations

NUT

S Baker and P Welch

4. County Council Representatives

Councillors J Blakey, M Dixon and M Simmons

Specialist Inspector (Religious Education and Citizenship)

Isobel Short

Educational Development Advisor (Religious Education and Citizenship)

Catherine Robson

Voluntary and Community Sector Officer

Ian Hunter Smart

1. Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Iveson, C Callaghan, A Carter, Ijou Derrache-Thompson, A Hartley, J Jewsbury, J Pallister, Bhakti Rasa and D Sadlik.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 March 2011

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 2 March 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters Arising

Referring to Item 9 of the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2011, Isobel attached the training material to the minutes that were requested by members at the last meeting. Members found the information very helpful.

Referring to Item 5 of the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2011, Linda Burton asked if the data letters sent to schools will have the paragraph explaining the purpose of the SACRE data letters. Isobel responded that the SACRE Task Group will look at the nature of the letters and make it clear why they are writing so the school have a clearer understanding.

Isobel informed SACRE that Ijou Derrache-Thompson is resigning from SACRE due to time commitments.

4. Chairs Comments

Judith Bainbridge informed members that she had sent letters to Roberta Blackman-Woods MP and Pat Glass MP on behalf of SACRE expressing concerns about the exclusion of RE in the English Baccalaureate. Judith received a general reply saying they would be looking into it. Isobel informed members that any decision will be made by the Government in June/July. Discussions took place regarding legislation and procedures. Councillor Dixon asked if Isobel could find out the next steps.

Discussions continued about the type of evidence that is being gathered about RE provision across the County and Country. Isobel responded that Ofsted visit 30 secondary schools per year to inspect RE. This would include the impact on RE of any curriculum changes at Key Stage 4 e.g. E.Bacc. Isobel has also sent letters to teachers in Durham asking them to provide evidence on what is happening in their schools.

Judith read out a letter from Jonathon Jewsbury which he sent to his Head Teacher and School Governor with his concerns about the reduction of RE in the curriculum plan due to cuts and staffing issues.

Isobel has had conversations with Jonathon, the Deputy and the Head Teacher and has agreed to visit the school to look at the curriculum and RE provision. Councillor Dixon requested a copy of the letter to discuss with Councillor Clare Vasey who is the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young Peoples Service.

It was agreed that Judith would write to the Head Teacher in response to Jonathon's letter.

5. SACRE Updates

Isobel Short presented the SACRE updates (for copy see file of minutes).

Isobel attended the NASACRE Annual General Meeting in Birmingham on the 11 May which she found valuable as it gave the opportunity to discuss national developments and difficulties with other advisors. Isobel expressed how fortunate she feels working for County Durham which is very supportive of RE and SACRE.

Linda Burton asked for clarification about RE in Academies. Isobel responded that the RE Guidance 2010 states that academies should teach RE in accordance to the Agreed Syllabus but there is nothing definite on what the syllabus should contain.

Members discussed the major funding body for academies and if they can determine what is taught in RE. Isobel commented that SACRE has no authority over what is being taught in academies but would make every effort to work in partnership with them. Isobel will monitor and provide feedback.

Catherine Robson presented an update detailing the work carried out in Primary and Secondary schools including the consultation on the Agreed Syllabus (for copy see file of minutes).

6. Celebrating RE

Celebrating RE event was held in March 2011 to raise the profile of RE and showcase the good work in schools.

Durham SACRE in partnership with Carter House and the Cathedral arranged an Art Competition for secondary schools to look at the value of Religious Education in the North East. Catherine invited members to view the winning art work. Winners will visit the Cathedral and the Angel of the North in July.

7. SACRE Briefing

Isobel informed members that an Open SACRE Task Group has been arranged for Tuesday 19 July 2011 to look at Primary RE and the Ofsted Long Report. Jo March will be inviting members to attend in due course.

8. Date of the Next Meeting

Thursday 3 November 2011.

9. Any other business

Ian Hunter Smart circulated details of an event on Celebrating Diversity which is taking place in Durham on the 18 June. Ian also mentioned that he would circulate the 'Faith in Sustainable Communities' brochure at the meeting in November.