

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held at the County Hall, Durham on Thursday 4 November 2010.

Present:

CANON L BURTON in the Chair

1. Church of England

Canon L Burton

2. Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

Roman Catholic

J Pallister

Methodist Church

J G Kidd and J Bainbridge

Assemblies of God

S Brown

Islam

Ijou Derrache – Thompson

Buddhism

W Gray

Bahá'í Faith

C Spencer

3. Teachers Associations

NUT

S Baker and P Welch

NAS / UWT

A Hartley

4. County Council Representatives

Councillors M Dixon

Specialist Inspector (Religious Education and Citizenship)

Isobel Short

Educational Development Advisor (Religious Education and Citizenship)

Catherine Robson

Engagement and Third Sector Officer

Ian Hunter Smart

1. Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from C Callaghan, A Carter, J Katsambis, I Osborne, Bhakti Rasa, C Reynolds, D Sadlik, Councillor J Blakey, Councillor S Iveson and Councillor M Simmons.

Linda Burton welcomed back Judith Bainbridge and was delighted she will be returning as Chair of SACRE. Judith thanked SACRE for their good wishes.

Isobel informed SACRE that Diane Mowbray is back to work after a long illness and she hopes to return to SACRE in the spring.

Bhakti Rasa emailed his apologies for the next 3 meetings as he is in India studying.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 10 June 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10 June 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Chairs Comments

Linda Burton commented on the Ofsted report stating that we need to focus on specific parts of the report and look at the exam data comparing year on year.

Linda received a letter of resignation from Charlotte Reynolds who has had to resign from SACRE as she is finding it difficult to attend during school time.

4. Matters Arising

Referring to item No. 3 of Matters Arising from the minutes of the meeting held on the 10 June 2010, Isobel had no further information on the legal position for Religious Education and Collective Worship within Secure Units.

Isobel contacted Bill Moore, Chair of NASACRE who was unable to clarify the legal position at this time. Isobel also stated that there will no longer be a DCSF or QCDA Advisor for RE. Isobel will continue to talk to other RE Inspector and Advisors across the Country.

Guidance suggests that SACRE can choose whether to have a Humanist as a representative or co-opted member on SACRE.

Councillor Mike Dixon informed SACRE that Durham has lost an Academy and that the Consett Academy is under threat.

Isobel informed members that Academies in Durham have indicated that they wish to buy the support and monitoring that Durham Education Service provides. It is unclear how much involvement SACRE would have with Academies. Linda asked if Isobel could find out nationally to try and get a collective response.

5. SACRE Updates

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

The Local Authority's budget is having some impact on SACRE. We will still have funding for identified work such as Audits, Inter Faith Conferences and Celebrating RE Month. Unfortunately we have been unsuccessful in securing funding for Bursary Awards.

Isobel has received several requests under the Freedom of Information Act for copies of Durham's Agreed Syllabus, funding for SACRE over the last 5 years, including professional and admin support. In the past we have had requests for our Agreed Syllabus, but have been reluctant to send without payment. Hartlepool paid £16,000 for Isobel to write their syllabus demonstrating that the cost for the production of an agreed syllabus is high. Durham cannot therefore provide the agreed syllabus for nothing.

Paul Welch read from the FOI Act 2000 which states in section 13.1 that a charge can be made for the Information supplied.

Isobel had been asked to comment on a request that had been received by a local MP who had received a letter from one of his constituents. The parent expressed concerns about the number of times children were being asked to pray throughout the day and the nature of the prayers. Isobel provided a detailed response on the law and the position of SACRE regarding collective worship and the use of prayer. Isobel has met with the head teacher to clarify the position and offer some advice and guidance.

Several schools are unclear about collective worship and the role of prayer in community schools. Isobel suggested that we reissue our guidance with additional advice about the use of prayer in schools and adapt our development plan.

Councillor Mike Dixon asked if collective worship training can be included in the teacher training days already set aside. Isobel responded only a few teachers may be interested as few have attended in the past. However this can be considered and offered.

Isobel has arranged collective worship training for SACRE members which is being held at County Hall on Thursday 13 January 2011 at 2.00pm.

6. Interfaith Week

Catherine Robson circulated details of the Inter Faith Week conferences which are to be held on 16 and 18 November 2010 at Spennymoor Development Centre.

Last year the Inter Faith conference was very successful with 115 students attending from 9 different schools. This year there are 16 schools attending over the 2 days with 6 schools on the reserve list.

Catherine thanked members for their invaluable support and invited members who are not already taking part to come along and observe.

Ian Hunter-Smart circulated details of an exhibition 'Building Bridges of Understanding' in celebration of Inter Faith Week which is being held in County Hall from Monday 22 to Thursday 25 November 2010. In addition there will be two awareness raising sessions 'Living as a Buddhist in County Durham' and 'Living as a Muslim in County Durham' which are taking place on 22 November and 24 November 2010.

Ian also circulated details of a 'Having Faith in the Big Society' workshop which is being held at Durham County Cricket Club, Chester le Street on Thursday 25 November 2010.

7. Ofsted Report

Isobel Short circulated her findings of the Ofsted Report (for copy see file of minutes).

Every 3 years Ofsted publish a report on each curriculum area based on subject scrutiny visits undertaken by HMI and RE specialist inspectors. 90 primary and 90 secondary schools are inspected over a 3 year period and judgements are made on teaching, learning, assessment, curriculum and leadership and management of the subject.

Isobel suggested that SACRE revisit the report at the next meeting to work in groups and discuss the report.

8. Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) Questionnaire Analysis

Catherine Robson circulated the responses from 64 Newly Qualified Teachers (for copy see file on minutes).

Religious Education was the main subject for only 3% of NQTs which reflects the trend of Initial Teaching Training programmes moving away from main subjects.

The NQTs identified training needs in knowledge and understanding of different religions, creative and challenging RE, resources for RE, understanding the Durham Agreed Syllabus and future updates and RE Networks.

9. Key Stage 4 Data Analysis 2010

Isobel Short circulated the Key Stage 4 Data Analysis for 2010 (for copy see file of minutes).

Isobel informed SACRE of the difficulty in achieving good grades in short courses but schools have seen huge improvement with 5 A* to C GCSE grades with English and Maths. Linda Burton commented that this rise may be having a consequence for RE as core subjects are concentrated to the detriment of RE.

Members asked if Isobel had previous years results to compare. She responded that when the SACRE task group meet to write letters to schools they can analyse progress over the last 3 years.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

Wednesday 2 March 2011.

11. Any Other Business

Isobel asked the SACRE Task Group members to stay behind to arrange a date for the next Task Group meeting to discuss result letters.

Wendy Gray and Paul Welch volunteered for the task group.