

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 9 June 2022 at**
1.30 pm

Present:

P Welch (Chair) In the Chair

Church of England

Canon L Burton

Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

S Baker - Roman Catholic

W Gray - Buddhism

Bhakti Rasa Dasa - Hinduism

C Spencer - Bahá'í Faith

Teachers Associations

B Dunn - RE Curriculum Group

S Lupton - RE Curriculum Group

County Council Representatives

Councillors M Walton

Co-opted Members

S Walker - Humanist

Specialist Inspector (Religious Education)

P Hodgson, Education Durham

1 Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from V Bain N Dodd, A Hartley, F Johnson, K Passmore, H Tait, D Van der Velde, C Weir and S Townsend.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

4 Matters Arising

The Chair asked that his thanks be placed on record for the refreshments which had been provided by S Walker, Humanists NE.

L Burton commented that she felt that the lack of refreshments provided for SACRE by Durham County Council showed a lack of appreciation for the work and role of the volunteers on SACRE.

The Chair then welcomed B Dunn to provide an update on the working group and evaluation of the Agreed Syllabus.

B Dunn advised that the group were focusing on a 4-stage approach, looking at evaluation of the syllabus, how we as SACRE develop this and identifying training needs as an ongoing process. It was noted that it would be beneficial to SACRE to invited C Robson to a future meeting to discuss how to successfully deliver the agreed syllabus.

P Hodgson, Education Durham noted that despite C Robson recently changing jobs, she had indicated that she would be willing to continue to support SACRE and he could arrange for this to take place at a future meeting.

The Chair asked whether any update could be provided regarding the application from the Humanist Co-opted member to become a full SACRE member. P Hodgson advised that there was quite a lengthy process which had to take place in order change the Council's Constitution, and he would take all appropriate steps to progress this before the next meeting. In addition, work would be ongoing to address vacancies as identified through the ongoing process of evaluation.

Resolved: That the matters arising be noted.

5 Chairs Comments

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education received an update from the Chair on the following matters for information.

NASACRE Annual Conference – this had been attended by two of the SACRE members, though not representing Durham SACRE who unfortunately were not in attendance at the meeting but had forwarded some reflections and thoughts following the session.

He further advised that regional hub leads for were being appointed by RE Today on a 24 days per year contract and this was something to be aware of going forward.

In addition, he noted that he had circulated a document to the working group (Draft Handbook Religion and Worldviews in the Classroom: developing a worldviews approach). A link could also be found to view the document online in the Education Durham report.

The Chair advised that in May 2021 and RE Research Review had been published by Ofsted and noted that another document looking at the quality of RE curriculums should be available soon. He suggested that this may be of interest to SACRE, and would make this available to SACRE when it was published.

L Burton asked whether any further information was available on the role of the Regional Hub Leads. The Chair provided some detail from the job description noting that they would be available for support for 2 days per month. It was further suggested that the newly appointed Hub Lead be invited to attend a future meeting of SACRE to discuss the draft handbook on Religion and Worldviews. The chair agreed to follow this up following their appointment.

Resolved:

That the update from the Chair be noted.

6 RE Report Card

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education received a report card provided by the Chair which aimed to help SACRE reflect on the performance of religious education in schools. The report card provided some performance highlights alongside some more negative facts and figures.

Councillor Walton added that she agreed that the report card started off very promising however she was alarmed to note that nothing had been spent on RE projects between 2016-2021 given the importance of this subject.

W Gray noted that she too agreed, in referencing page 43 that there was a real opportunity to embed RE in the next Agreed Syllabus and influence how schools in County Durham develop this subject.

S Lupton commented that it was good to see RE back on the Ofsted agenda again and looking at how the subject was delivered in schools as this was real motivation for schools to drive forward improvements in this area.

The Chair commented that he agreed with the points made and noted he had also seen positive improvements in this area.

W Gray further noted that whilst not all secondary schools were local authority schools, SACRE did have a responsibility to all schools including academies.

L Burton commented that she was delighted to hear about the quality of RE in S Lupton's school and this translated through to the quality of results. She did however note that one major barrier to delivering this subject successfully was a lack of subject specialists.

It was further discussed how schools could offer diametrically different ways of teaching this subject but yet deliver high results providing the environment was a diverse and stimulating one.

Resolved:

That the content of the RE Report Card be noted.

7 Education Durham Report to SACRE

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education considered a report of J Rimmer, Education Durham which provided an overview of support provided to schools since April 2021 to date (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Walton asked whether further information regarding SLAs with schools was available and what services these covered. P Hodgson advised that SLAs provided access to a number of contracted hours of general support, usually 6/9 hours.

Further to a question regarding 'deep dives' into Religious Education via Ofsted and P Hodgson explained that deep dive exercises were a process of gathering evidence on the effectiveness of the curriculum and how well it is being taught. The intent of the deep dive was to seek to interrogate and establish a better understanding on the quality of education provided in the school.

L Burton added that the quality of provision provided to schools by this local authority was not clear from reading the report and noted the excellent working relationship that Durham County Council had with SACRE. In response P Hodgson noted previous concerns raised regarding the previous

resources which had been made available to SACRE via Isobel Short. He further noted that many schools were no longer maintained and therefore the council had no mandate over them unless there was a standards' concern.

W Gray added that she agreed with Councillor Walton and that sight of the Ofsted reports where a deep dive had been conducted would be useful.

Further discussion ensued regarding the resources which could be made available to SACRE. P Hodgson noted that there were obvious budget constraints and the climate of education had changed considerably over recent years, however he would endeavour to get the right support for SACRE.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

8 SACRE Self Evaluation Process

The Chair whilst noting the limited time remaining, requested that the meeting split in to two smaller groups to look at Key Area 1 and Key Area 5 of the Self Evaluation Toolkit with a view to coming together at the end of the meeting to share thoughts.

He further noted that the next agenda would allow for adequate time to prioritise the other key areas of self-evaluation.

Findings:

Key Area 1 a – d

1a - The group found that SACRE was both **Developing** and **Established**.

1b – **Established** was being fully met.

1c – This was found to be sitting between **Developing** and **Established** due to there being some concerns regarding attendance and timing of meetings. The Chair agreed to follow up on this matter.

1d – This was found to be **Requiring improvement / struggling** and the group felt that this area was not well planned or set out for SACRE.

Key Area 5 a – c

5a – This was found to be sitting between **Developing** and **Established** mainly due to the difficulties in maintaining active members, however following the pending review of SACRE membership this would likely move to Established.

5c – Was found to be **Established**, noting that improvements could be gained from the return of inter-faith events and rebuilding networks within schools.

Resolved:

That the comments of the two groups be noted and further work on SACREs self-evaluation be undertaken at the next meeting.

9 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 3 November 2022 at 1.30 p.m.