

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 2 March 2023 at 1.30 pm**

Present:

P Welch (Chair) In the Chair

Church of England

Canon L Burton, N Dodd and K Passmore

Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

S Baker	- Roman Catholic
F Johnson	- Methodist Church
C Spencer	- Bahá'í Faith
M Turner	- Islam
D Van der Velde	- Judaism

Teachers Associations

B Dunn	- RE Curriculum Group
A Hartley	- NASUWT
P Welch	- NASUWT

County Council Representatives

Councillors S Townsend, C Varty and M Walton

Co-opted Members

A Walker	- Humanist
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Specialist Inspector (Religious Education)

P Hodgson

1 Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Barron, W Gray, S Lupton, H Tait and C Weir.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Matters Arising

Councillor Varty raised a query regarding the location of future meetings and whether it would be possible to hold meetings at schools or other community venues. The Chair suggested that this is something that could be explored in the future, however the following meetings would be held at County Hall, Durham at the later time of 3.00 p.m. to encourage attendance especially from those working in schools.

8 June 2023

9 November 2023

7 March 2024

C Spencer commented that she commended the Chair and officers for attempting to encourage better attendance at meetings and would be interested to see whether any improvement would be seen.

Some members expressed their concern at the later start time however accepted that the change to the start time was a trial which would be reviewed ahead of the next cycle of meetings.

5 Education Durham Report to SACRE

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education considered a report of P Hodgson, Education Durham which provided an overview and update of support provided since the last meeting along with information on Ofsted reviews and data around GCSE entries and attainment (for copy see file of Minutes).

P Hodgson advised that further to discussion at the previous meeting some further analysis of data had been completed and was included within the report. He explained that 35% of GCSE students had been entered for RE nationally with 29.1% entered locally.

The report further provided detail around Ofsted deep dives along with Ofsted subject reviews. P Hodgson explained that Ofsted had begun to publish a new round of subject reviews, a future report on R.E. was awaited.

Moving on, P Hodgson reported upon support and resources provided for schools by Education Durham including training which had been recorded and was intended to be placed on the new schools' portal which was to be live from April 2023.

He further provided details of networks taking place across the spring and summer terms. In addition, as part of the drive by Education Durham to build capacity for subject support in schools, consultation with head teachers had led to the addition of 5 R.E. subject specialists who will work alongside Catherine Robson as part of the Associate Advisor team. It was hoped that an update on the work of the team would be available to present at the next meeting.

Further discussion took place surrounding declining numbers of students studying R.E. and Councillor Varty suggested that the pandemic may have damaged R.E. In response P Hodgson added that the team needed to get a better understanding of this through analysis of data and this would be reflected in a future report to SACRE.

K Passmore commented that the report and data included within, gave SACRE real direction going forward. She acknowledged that the transition of pupils from primary to secondary was challenging for the subject and SACRE should explore ways to support that transition.

Discussion then went on surrounding higher attaining schools, literacy, and disadvantaged students. It was also suggested that it would be useful to obtain data from 2019 to assess the data published pre-pandemic under normal circumstances and further data surrounding where there had been no entry in core R.E.

L Burton suggested that it may also prove useful for head teachers to be asked to provide details of the core RE provision within their schools, however suggested that this request should come from Education Durham.

The Chair noted that there were different stories and realities behind all schools and many of those issues came back to RE specialist teacher recruitment, rurality and so on. K Passmore noted that this was a national concern and the RE Hub project which she was involved with were looking at ways to open conversations around this complex topic.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

6 Chairs Comments

The Chair provided some detail surrounding local census data and specifically that relating to KS4 and local authority rank order. He noted that in County Durham there had been 1,518 entries in Religious Studies at KS4 (28.7%), with a national ranking at 96 out of 149 local authorities.

K Passmore further suggested that she would share the most recent NATRE presentation with the group and P Welch agreed that this could be discussed further at the next meeting with a view to filling some of the gaps in the data.

The Chair further noted that Cabinet had approved the requested change to the Constitution to allow SACRE's Humanist representative to become a full voting member. SACRE would be required to formally adopt the change and therefore a report would be brought to a future meeting.

7 Working Group Report on Religion and Worldviews

The Chair invited B Dunn to provide an update on discussion and areas of work to take forward following a meeting of the above working group.

B Dunn advised that the group had looked at two key themes and provided feedback on each as follows.

How to evaluate existing Agreed Syllabus.

The syllabus does include reference to religious and non-religious world views, and this is woven throughout. It is especially clear in the KS4 modules exploring more complex themes and issues. A key action would be to evaluate how this has been received and implemented in schools. It has been suggested that SACRE representation in the form of P Welch and B Dunn from the curriculum group could speak with colleagues at network meetings to gather information regarding this.

How to develop the religious and non-religious worldviews strand through the Durham Agreed Syllabus going forward.

It is important to develop an authentic voice whilst exploring the non-religious worldviews so that are treated with the same integrity, depth, and diversity as the religions in the Durham Agreed Syllabus. For example, belief systems such as 'Humanism' could be explored in the same way we would explore a religious viewpoint to be treated with equity. K Passmore gave further examples of key beliefs that should be included such as 'Veganism' which although centred around one theme is explored through the Religious Education curriculum. This needs to both meet national requirements and provide a worthwhile and purposeful curriculum approach which both explores the development of the individual and has academic rigour.

Considerations

Does the Syllabus need a post-COVID relaunch in order to embed the progress already made and appropriately skill teachers up for dealing with the changing face of the RE curriculum after the limitations placed when the Durham Agreed Syllabus was initially released. This has been a method utilised by other SACREs.

The working group were to meet prior to the next SACRE meeting to explore materials prepared to ascertain questions and actions for the two key themes highlighted above. Working party invitations and materials were to be shared with

all SACRE members and appropriate additional interested parties following the meeting.

8 Community Cohesion

The Chair advised that this had been requested to be a standing item on the agenda moving forward, however he had received no prior notification of any topics which were to be discussed.

K Passmore, advised that there were two upcoming events which may be of interest to SACRE members as follows:

3 June 2023 – Opening Up Gods House

15 May 2023 – Magic is a World View

9 SACRE Medium and Long-Term Planning

The Chair explained that further to work undertaken on SACREs self-evaluation it would be important to look at medium-term priorities and well as longer-term priorities, development areas and timescales.

He therefore suggested that the meeting split in to 2 groups to discuss with a view to discussing in more depth at the next meeting of SACRE.

Initial Feedback on Areas of discussion:

Short-term planning

- Improve membership.
- Provide better support to schools – impact in classroom.
- Further work on religious and non-religious worldviews.

Long-term planning

- Improve attendance, look to bring in members of faith to meetings for purposes of presentation, with a view to rebuilding the community network.
- Researching the possibility of a Youth SACRE
- Attending network meeting to share best practice.
- Annual Conference – seek funding through community cohesion.

10 Date and time of the next meeting.

8th June 2023 at 3.00 p.m.