

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held at the County Hall, Durham on Thursday 3 November 2011.

Present:

J Bainbridge in the Chair

1. Church of England

Canon L Burton Revd. J Jewsbury and D Mowbray-Pape

2. Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

Methodist Church

J Bainbridge

Roman Catholic

J Pallister

Judaism

D Sadlik

Assemblies of God

S Brown

Buddhism

W Gray

Bahá'í Faith

C Spencer

3. Teachers Associations

NUT

S Baker

RE Curriculum Group

A Carter

4. County Council Representatives

Councillor M Dixon

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 Hartley, J Katsambis, J Kidd, Bhakti Rasa and P Welch.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 June 2011

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 9 June 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters Arising

Referring to Item 4 paragraph 3 of the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2011. Judith Bainbridge, Chair of SACRE wrote to the Head Teacher in response to Jonathan Jewsbury's letter and informed members that Isobel Short, Specialist Inspector for Religious Education had since visited the school to look at the curriculum and RE provision. Jonathan felt that things have improved, and thanked Isobel and SACRE for a positive outcome.

4. Chairs Comments

The Chair informed members that the SACRE Task Group in September discussed the possibility of holding another Interfaith Conference in the Spring or Summer term 2012. Catherine Robson, the Education Development Advisor submitted a proposal for a virtual conference where questions are received via emails or text streaming. With this interaction with technology overheads would be reduced.

Isobel informed members that Lat Blaylock had contacted her to invite SACRE to work in partnership with RE Today Services to offer a pupil conference and inset for teachers. RE Today Services would be free of charge.

SACRE agreed to take up this offer and organise a virtual conference at a later date.

Isobel had met with Dave Ford, Head of Achievement Services to discuss her work programme in light of external contracts, including the revision of Agreed Syllabuses in Hartlepool and Sunderland. Judith expressed concern about Isobel's workload especially with the added pressure of Agreed Syllabus work. Judith suggested if necessary, she would write a letter of support to the Head of Achievement to defer some of Isobel's inspections in order to concentrate on the Agreed Syllabus. Isobel thanked SACRE for this support but felt that Dave Ford was sympathetic and supportive; he is aware of the priority of Agreed Syllabus work.

5. Revision of Agreed Syllabus

Jo March, Committee Services Officer presented a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in relation to the proposal for the revision of the agreed syllabus (for copy see file of minutes).

SACRE formally agreed to stand as Agreed Syllabus Conference members.

6. Showcase of Vodcast

Members viewed a vodcast that had been produced by Gayle Hackett on the importance of RE. Dorothy Sadlik stated that she thought this was an excellent resource and asked how it would be used in schools. Isobel informed members that the vodcast will be used at networks, governor and senior leadership team meetings. It can also be used as an investigative tool with students in secondary schools. Gayle is also willing to develop other vodcasts on particular issues with the help of SACRE members.

Catherine Robson, Education Development Advisor informed members that Gayle had offered a training session in December for students to “make your own vodcast”. Faith members will be asked if they would be willing to be interviewed.

Catherine is also developing an ICT Guide specifically for RE which will be launched at the next network meeting.

7. SACRE Updates

Isobel Short, Specialist Inspector for Religious Education and Citizenship presented the SACRE updates (for copy see file of minutes).

It was announced on the 20 July 2011 that RE would not be included in the English Baccalaureate. Although this is a disappointing decision, the campaign has raised the profile of RE and ministers have said that the English Baccalaureate will be regularly reviewed and consideration will be given in the future.

Isobel informed members that teachers have heard a rumour that the government may abolish the short course. Isobel spoke to the HMI for RE (Her Majesty's Inspector – Ofsted) who said this is not confirmed and schools could continue to use short courses.

Isobel stated that a new document on Qualifications for 14-16 year old Performance Tables had been published which suggests that the point score will be changed from 2014 and will not include all current courses (including short course). It also states that the number of guided learning hours for full course is 120 hours.

Discussions took place about the position of Academies and whether SACRE should still maintain contact with Academies and offer service and support. It was suggested an Open Task group be arranged to discuss the issue further.

Isobel invited members to email her with any comments.

8. Celebrating RE Competition Report

Catherine Robson, Education Development Advisor presented a report on the Celebrating RE Art competition that took place in March 2011.

The winning schools were invited to explore various artworks around the North East which included visiting Durham Cathedral and the Angel of the North.

Catherine circulated postcards to members which had been produced for secondary schools to promote Religious Education.

9. Annual Subject Report

Isobel Short, Specialist Inspector for Religious Education and Citizenship presented the Annual Subject Report (for copy see file of minutes).

Isobel informed SACRE that inspectors have been asked to slightly change the way they monitor RE which also includes producing an annual report based on that academic year.

The annual report is based on visits to 12 schools. Isobel highlighted from the report the following questions that senior and subject leaders should reflect on:-

- Is the current provision, entry policy and intervention for RE at Key Stage 4 enabling students to attain and make sufficient progress in line with their ability?
- How can leaders ensure that the RE curriculum and planning enables students to be appropriately challenged in lessons?
- How can schools give students opportunities to encounter members of faith communities and consider the impact of religion and beliefs on people today?

Isobel also highlighted the strengths and areas for development around RE.

Previously visits have been over a 2 year cycle with 16 schools per year, however this will change. It is unclear which schools will now be monitored, whether inspectors will visit schools to look at good practice or visit weaker schools.

Isobel will keep members informed and provide an update to the next SACRE meeting.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

Thursday 1 March 2012.

11. Any other business

Ian Hunter Smart, Voluntary and Community Sector Officer circulated the 'Faith in Sustainable Communities' brochure and a 'Living well together in Britain Today' leaflet (for copy see file of minutes). Ian also informed members that Interfaith week will be held from 20 to 26 November 2011.