

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in Committee Room 1A , County Hall, Durham on Thursday 9 November 2023 at 3.00 pm

Present:

P Welch (Chair) In the Chair

Church of England

Canon L Burton, N Dodd, K Passmore and C Weir

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
S Walker	- Humanist

County Council Representatives

Councillors D Haney, M Walton and M Wilson

Local Authority Education Advisor

S Blakeman

1 Introductions, Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Members to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from V Bain, B Dunn, M Dixon, W Gray, A Hartley, S Lupton, and H Tait.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to minute No. 7, paragraph 4, the word 'meet' replaced with 'meeting'.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations on interest.

4 Matters Arising

C Spencer asked that teachers be advised to contact SACRE Members if they required a speaker from a particular faith group.

In response to a question from F Johnson, the Senior Professional Learning Advisor indicated that there were no scheduled launches of the Agreed Syllabus planned but there would be a re-launch of the next Agreed Syllabus in 2025 which Members of SACRE would be invited to attend.

D Van der Velde advised Members that she used Microsoft Teams or Zoom to deliver talks on Judaism. She continued by referring to a short video that had been produced by International Durham, Durham County Council that could be accessed on YouTube and was entitled 'Judaism in the North East England' that was produced for Durham Schools.

Members were advised that videos had also been produced for Diwali and Islam.

Members asked for the links to the videos to be circulated to SACRE Members so that they could be shared with school hubs and networks.

In response to a question from Canon L Burton the Senior Professional Learning Advisor indicated that there would be a presentation from a secondary school on how the Agreed Syllabus was brought to life in a secondary classroom at the next SACRE meeting.

5 Chairs Comments

The Chair indicated that the school where he worked were expecting an Ofsted inspection and he had heard that Religious Education could be one of the subjects to be inspected for a Deep Dive. He commented that preparing for the inspection had created a lot of work and was keeping him busy.

He then wished to convey his thanks to Phil Hodgson, Education Durham, who had recently provided professional support to SACRE but retired from the authority at the end of August 2023.

He continued by referring to SACRE Membership and indicated that he had received the resignation of V Bain who was representing the NEU and he had also received correspondence from the RE Curriculum Group representatives expressing their desire to resign. He had asked both colleagues to rethink their resignation and indicated that if they still wished to resign then they would look to appoint new representatives to the RE Curriculum Group. He commented that this may be linked to the timing of the SACRE meetings, and this may need to be reviewed at a later date.

He then read out the summary of an article in the Daily Telegraph on 17 September 2023, around pupils receiving a tokenistic Religious Education, warn cross-party MPs and peers.

He continued by raising his concerns about the lack of trainees coming through to Religious Education and provided examples of what was happening in the SCITT linked to the Academy Trust, where he worked, in particular that they received no applications for Religious Education vacancies for a number of years and stated that SACRE should be concerned.

The Chair then referred to the RE Hub and asked K Passmore for an update who provided Members with an update and indicated that the Hub launched in August 2023, and they already had 120 local groups registered. She indicated that she was creating a presentation for teacher networks, and she was happy to share this with Durham SACRE for circulation.

Members discussed the Hub and the issues around the lack of trainees for Religious Education, in particular for secondary schools.

6 Revised SACRE Constitution

SACRE considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that provided a new constitution which reflected the amended membership of Committee A (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

An alteration to the SACRE constitution can only be approved by Cabinet. At the meeting held on 14 December 2022 Cabinet approved a request made by the Director of Children and Young People on behalf of SACRE to alter their constitution to enable Humanist representation.

K Clayton, Legal Manager was in attendance to present the report and answer any questions from Members.

Resolved: The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education noted the amended Constitution which included a representative of the Humanist non-religious worldview as a full member, alongside denominations and religions currently forming Committee A.

7 SACRE Medium and Long-Term Planning

The Chair referred to the completion of the NASACRE evaluation process which SACRE has been engaged with over previous meetings including a SWOT analysis.

Following a discussion on the medium and longer term planning the Chair agreed to carry out some further work on the analysis and pull together potential priorities for SACRE to be presented at the next meeting.

8 Education Durham Report to SACRE

The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education considered a report of S Blakeman, Senior Advisor for Education Durham that provided a summary of the professional development and networking opportunities available to RE leaders and teachers, observations from Ofsted inspections and training opportunities that had been shared with the advisory team. The report also provided details of the Farmington Scholarship for leaders and teachers (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

S Blakeman, Senior Advisor for Education Durham was in attendance to present the report and answer any questions from Members.

Members advised that C Robson had been Head of RE at Framwellgate Comprehensive School and not Durham Johnston Comprehensive School as indicated in the report.

Canon L Burton raised concerns around the attendance at RE subject leader network meetings and the future of these networks.

The Senior Advisor for Education Durham indicated that low attendance at secondary network meetings were across all subjects and understood Members concerns and wanted to continue offering the opportunities to attend networks.

The Chair indicated that Academies have their own networks and commented that it was difficult for colleagues to get time out from teaching.

Members discussed the network meetings that were held across other authorities, in particular how often they were held and if they were held in person or virtually and the topics covered.

Resolved: That the contents of the report be noted.

9 Working Group Report on Religion and Worldviews

The Chair asked for volunteers to lead the Working Group on Religion and Worldviews.

Members discussed the Working Group and agreed to pause this work and pick it up at a later date.

10 Community Cohesion

C Spencer advised Members of a County Durham Faith Network taking place on Monday 13 November 2023 at 6.00 pm at the Oriental Museum. She asked Members to contact her if they wished to attend the event.

11 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of SACRE was scheduled to be held on 7 March 2024 at 3.00 pm.

12 Any other business

The Local Authority Education Advisor provided Members with details of the new Regional Advisor for Jigsaw RE in the North East.