

## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

**At a Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held at the County Hall, Durham on Wednesday 2 March 2011.**

**Present:**

**J Bainbridge in the Chair**

**1. Church of England**

Canon L Burton, J Katsambis and D Mowbray-Pape

**2. Other Religious Denominations and Faiths**

**Roman Catholic**

I Osborne

**Methodist Church**

J Bainbridge

**Assemblies of God**

S Brown

**Judaism**

D Sadlik

**Buddhism**

W Gray

**Bahá'í Faith**

C Spencer

**3. Teachers Associations**

**R E Curriculum Group**

A Carter

**NUT**

S Baker and P Welch

**4. County Council Representatives**

Councillor S Iveson

**Specialist Inspector (Religious Education and Citizenship)**

Isobel Short

**Educational Development Advisor (Religious Education and Citizenship)**

Catherine Robson

## **1. Introductions, Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Blakey, Councillor Dixon, Councillor Simmons, C Callaghan, Ijou Derrache-Thompson, A Hartley, J Kidd, J Pallister, J Pearce, Bhakti Rasa, M Stephenson and I Hunter Smart.

Linda commented that she had concerns about members who don't attend SACRE meetings regularly and don't submit their apologies. Linda stressed that we need members to be present especially when discussing the Agreed Syllabus.

Judith Bainbridge and Isobel Short suggested that they should meet to discuss memberships. Isobel could write to groups asking if they are still interested in being members of SACRE, this would give them an opportunity to select alternative representatives.

## **2. Who Are We? Presentation**

Wendy Gray gave a presentation about Buddhism and how her faith affects her life. Wendy was thanked for an interesting and informative talk that was appreciated by all.

## **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 4 November 2010**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 4 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **4. Publication of Papers**

Isobel informed members that Democratic Services are working towards introducing an electronic system which will provide efficiencies in producing agendas and packs of committee papers. SACRE papers would be published on Durham County Councils website 5 clear working days before the meeting to comply with access requirements.

## **5. Chairs Comments**

Judith Bainbridge had received 3 letters in response to the SACRE data letters that were sent to schools in December 2010. One school had questioned the role of SACRE and whether SACRE had acted beyond their remit in monitoring exam entries. Judith had written to the school to outline the responsibilities of SACRE and affirm that they had not acted beyond their remit.

Members discussed the content of the letters and Isobel explained that the information used came from the Local Authority data analysis. Anne Carter had received a letter which had questioned A\*/A underachievement. Anne was annoyed by the letter as they had achieved an A\* - C pass rate of 70%.

In response Isobel suggested that SACRE could decide to stop sending data letters to schools but that SACRE has a responsibility to monitor the teaching

of RE; this includes supporting and challenging schools in attainment and achievement at Key Stage 4.

Paul Welch stated that the Task Group had spent considerable time analysing each school in great detail and the letters were sent to challenge schools.

Members discussed the issue of the balance between encouraging and supporting schools and RE departments in offering challenges so that RE is on par with other subjects.

It was suggested that a paragraph is inserted into the letter written to every school explaining the purpose of the SACRE data letters.

## **6. Matters Arising**

Referring to item 7 from the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2010, Isobel asked members if they would prefer an Open SACRE Task Group session in the Summer Term or to dedicate the next SACRE meeting in June to discuss the Ofsted Report.

Members agreed to an Open SACRE Task Group in the Summer Term.

## **7. Agreed Syllabus Conference**

Isobel is starting work on the Agreed Syllabus for the launch in 2012. Members will take part in an Agreed Syllabus Conference in June.

## **8. Interfaith Week**

Judith congratulated Catherine Robson on arranging a very successful Interfaith Week Event in November. Catherine thanked SACRE members for attending the event at Spennymoor and asked members for theme suggestions for next year.

Catherine Robson informed members that Durham SACRE in partnership with Carter House and the Cathedral are arranging an art competition for secondary schools to look at the value of Religious Education in the North East. Entries will be judged from 1.00pm - 3.00pm on the 5 May at County Hall. Catherine invited members to contact Jo March if they were interested in judging the competition.

## **9. Collective Worship**

Isobel Short provided Collective Worship training for SACRE members on the 13 January 2011. Members who attend thought the training was very beneficial. Isobel is in the process of arranging half day teacher training sessions on Collective Worship for schools.

Irene Osborne asked if Isobel could circulate the Collective Worship training material to members that were unable to attend the training session in January. Isobel agreed and would circulate electronically.

## **10. SACRE Annual Report**

Isobel Short presented the Annual SACRE Report (for copy see file of Minutes).

Members noted the report and were asked to email any comments to Isobel.

## **11. SACRE Updates**

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

Government are encouraging schools to apply for Academy status. Shotton Hall is now an academy, two other academies in County Durham are opening in September with another 5 schools registering an interest in Academy status.

Academies are no longer Local Authority schools; as a result SACRE would no longer have an official role in these schools. The legal position of RE in Academies is still unclear. Guidance 2010 states that non-faith Academies should teach RE according to the Agreed Syllabus but that is not the case under the Academies Act 2010 where RE may no longer be statutory.

Isobel wrote to SACRE members in January informing them of the Governments proposals of introducing a new English Bacculaureate which excludes Religious Studies. Isobel has written to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education with concerns that the exclusion of RE will have a detrimental effect.

The response from the Government as to why RE is not included in the English Bacculaureate is because RE is already a compulsory subject.

Concerns about the position of RE due to this Government initiative were discussed.

## **12. Date of the Next Meeting**

Thursday 9 June 2011.