

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

6 March 2023

PRESENT: Karen Butler (Chairman), Barbara Meaney (Vice-Chairman), Dai Prendiville, Thomas Kingsley-Jones, David Saunders, Anthony Lewis, Saghir Ahmed, Laura Dexter, David Saunders, Councillors Donna Stimson and Shamsul Shelim.

PRESENT (virtually): Illa Gangotra, Clare Roberts, Chris Sayers, Ravinder Singh Zandu and Councillor Julian Sharpe

Officers in attendance: Anne Andrews and Laurence Ellis

ACTION

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves. The Chair also introduced the new clerk to SACRE, Laurence Ellis, Democratic Services Officer.

2 Introduction to RE at Churchmead

Thomas Kingsley-Jones welcomed everyone to Churchmead School and then introduced an RE curriculum roadmap which illustrated religious education (RE) planning at Churchmead. He then briefly explained how the religions were taught throughout the curriculum from year 7 to year 12.

The Chair requested that Thomas Kingsley-Jones forward the documents to Laurence Ellis so that they could be circulated amongst online attendees.

ACTION: Thomas Kingsley-Jones to forward Laurence Ellis the documents circulated amongst SACRE meeting attendees, who would then circulate them to online attendees.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones then presented a short video which showcased the views and enthusiasm of students on religious education at Churchmead School.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones then explained the RE Quality Mark: an award scheme to celebrate good religious education in schools, administered by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. Schools were reviewed based on a set of strands: curriculum, learning, leadership and teaching. He mentioned that Churchmead had received a gold award from this scheme.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones then discussed the SIAMS report (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools), following an inspection of Churchmead in March 2022. He directed meeting attendees to their report, which conveyed positive results.

The Chair extended her appreciation to the students who made the short video on religious education at Churchmead.

David Saunders asked if a cost was involved for the Quality Mark. Thomas Kingsley-Jones confirmed this, stating that the cost to take part in the scheme was £475.

The Chair asked what else was involved in the Quality Mark. Thomas Kingsley-Jones explained that the Quality Mark also involved knowing about the RE department itself and being aware of what was going on in it as well as understanding, for example, the way students view the subject and what they were being taught. He also added that good quality RE involved treating people as human beings and understanding that students were on a journey towards an understanding of their place in the world.

Anthony Lewis asked where the RE curriculum roadmap came from. Thomas Kingsley-Jones believed that it came from a school in northern England. Anne Andrews, SACRE Adviser, added that it was shown during a SIAMS training session and that it was to illustrate that the curriculum is a journey.

3 Apologies For Absence

Apologies were received from Rev. Vicci Davidson, Michael Gammage, Hilary Harris and Rev. Sara Chesterfield-Terry.

The Chair explained to attendees that Rev Vicci Davidson was the new representative for the Methodist and Free Churches.

4 Minutes Of Meeting on 08/12/22

Near the end of the meeting (during Item 21 – Any Other Business), David Saunders pointed out that the financial numbers under Budget Update appeared incorrect.

ACTION: SACRE Clerk to amend the figures in consultation with Clive Haines

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

5 Matters arising

The Chair went through the actions from the last meeting, with the suggestion that some of these actions would be discussed under the Membership Update and Training Opportunities.

On the list of attendees on NASCRE training sessions, the Chair confirmed that the upfront amount had been paid. She added that Laurence Ellis would continue updating the list.

ACTION: Laurence Ellis to continue to update the NASCRE training list.

6 Membership Update

The Chair decided to combine Item 6 (Membership) with Item 12 (Membership update and proposed constitutional revision).

Looking at the SACRE membership list in the report, there were 2 vacancies for the Free Churches as well as vacancies for a Headteacher and Academy representative. There had been a proposal that two headteachers should share the Headteacher representative role to increase the chances that a headteacher would be free to attend each SACRE meeting.

Another proposal was to revise SACRE's constitution to make the Humanism representative role a full member in Group A rather than a co-optee.

Anthony Lewis, the Humanist representative, temporarily left the room while the meeting discussed the proposal.

David Saunders asked if this was a set precedent for all SACREs across the country. Anne Andrews replied that around half of SACREs across the UK had a full Humanist representative.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones asked what SACRE was supposed to be. He explained that if it was supposed to represent the faiths of the students being taught in school, then he would support this proposal as he had non-religious students in his classes. Anne Andrews replied that SACRE membership, particularly in Group A, should be representative of the local area. She added that, according to the latest Census, the number of non-religious people was lower than the number of Christians but higher than other religions. She also stated that Humanists likely represented a third of non-religious people. She explained that Humanists were the only organised group which were categorised under the non-religious umbrella other than the National Secular Society (NSS), though the latter included religious members who believed in separating church and state.

Anne Andrews argued that making the Humanist representative a full member would pre-empt any rear-guard actions in response to the Census data, adding that some SACREs had been taken to court over a lack of non-religious representatives.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones suggested that the title of the position should perhaps be 'non-religious representative', stating that students who identify as non-religious may not identify as Humanists or have ever heard of Humanism. Based on this, the Chair suggested the post be titled: 'non-religious worldviews representative' and then ask the Local Authority to agree to the change.

Anne Andrews then asked the meeting if they would support the proposal of a new permanent position within Group A which would be titled as 'non-religious worldview representative' rather than Humanist. The majority voted in favour. Saghir Ahmed abstained because he believed that the post should be Humanist as it was an organised group.

RESOLVED: Establish a new permanent position of 'non-religious worldviews representative' within Group A of SACRE.

Based on this, SACRE would convey the proposal to the Local Authority for a permanent post of 'non-religious worldviews representative' within Group A. The proposal would also go through legal review.

ACTION: SACRE to forward the proposal to the Local Authority for a permanent post of 'non-religious worldviews representative' within Group A.

Anthony Lewis returned to the meeting; the proposition was explained to him to which he accepted.

7 SACRE Development Plan

The Chair introduced the SACRE Development Plan and then talked through

the progress in each area, starting with SACRE self-assessment tool:

- Key Area 1a (Funding: Professional and financial support) – further progress was required on the costs to Development Plan and may likely not happen until the Autumn Term of 2023.
- Key Area 1b (SACRE meetings) – progress had generally been positive, including the promotion of contact between SACRE members outside of meetings. The Chair added that she would be chairing a discussion about the Jewish faith and teaching RE in schools. This and other faith group discussions taking place involved different members of RBWM SACRE.
- Key Area 1c (Membership and training) – the Chair mentioned that new SACRE members would be eligible to attend the induction training in June 2023.
- Key Area 1e (Information and advice) – further progress was required. Anne Andrews added that 2 more schools were added for inspection: Eton Wick and Queen Anne First School.
- Key Area 1f (Partnerships with key stakeholders) – the main action had been met where Churchmead students shared their views at the start of the meeting. However, ITT students had not yet attended RE Network meetings.
- Key Area 1g (Relations with the Academies sector) – acquiring headteacher representatives had not been achieved yet.

The Chair then discussed the additional priority areas:

- Self-Assessment for RE – further progress was required to ensure all RBWM schools were introduced to and invited to use the REQM criteria. On collective worship, Barbara Meaney had created a tick box document for schools to fill out on how they handled collective worship.
- Promote high quality RE teaching – the Chair reported that the network meetings with teachers were going smoothly.
- Prepare for the New Agreed RE Syllabus Review – further progress was required.

8 RBWM schools' involvement in RE self-assessment update

While missing the recent catch-up meeting on the audit, Clare Roberts explained that she had found it a comprehensive tool which had made her consider how to review the quality of teaching and learning in RE. She stated that there were still areas to improve as well as to provide further support to teachers.

Laura Dexter found the audit helpful, providing a moderation cycle on the key areas and creating focussed professional dialogue. She also stated that she was working on an early years audit to ensure that learning in RE opened younger children's minds to understand different religions better.

Barbara Meaney explained that she had done much work around the audit. Following a recent review meeting at her school, it was agreed to plan out the school year; for example, the autumn term would focus on evaluating teaching and learning, while the spring term would be the curriculum. The next step was to meet with Churchmead to work on Key Stage 3.

The Chair thanked Barbara Meaney, Clare Roberts and Laura Dexter for their work to develop the self-assessment tool.

9 Feedback from Teachers

Dai Prendiville explained that during a conference, he was introduced to 'Solution Not Sides', a charity which explored the Israel-Palestine conflict, namely organising training and education sessions on the conflict's history, resolutions to it and even a dialogue between a Palestinian and an Israeli. He then stated that he was planning to arrange these sessions in his school's (Desborough College) RE lessons during the summer of 2023.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones reported that Churchmead had two Christian representatives visit to talk about what it was like to be a Christian Heathrow Airline Chaplain. He had also planned a couple of trips: one to Winchester Cathedral and another to the Gurdwara in Slough.

Barbara Meaney explained that her Year 8 class were also planning to go to the Gurdwara in Slough before Easter break.

Clare Roberts explained that her school had arranged an RE Day at the beginning of February 2023, a day dedicated across the whole school to all things RE related. The day involved the local vicar attending the school as well as parents visiting and sharing their faith. There were also re-enactments of parables during dramas as well as Muslim pupils sharing photos and prayer mats from their recent pilgrimage. In spite of this, as with many other schools, there were still challenges around the provision of effective teaching and learning for pupils with SEN (Special Educational Needs).

Laura Dexter explained that she had taken three trips to London in the previous week, which included a visit to St. Paul's Cathedral. At Furze Platt Infant School, there were suggestions to study Islam during Ramadan by presenting a key question on Islam at the start of each half-term. There were also going to be studies on Christianity during the lead up to Easter.

Councillor Stimson asked if there was a way to spread an attitude of kindness across all classes to help with students with special needs or with personal struggles like stress and anxiety. Anne Andrews replied that it was based on the school's ethos, and that what could be done was to ensure teachers and schools were mindful of the students' mental and physical health and wellbeing. She added that this was down to the schools' governing bodies rather than SACRE.

The Chair suggested that Councillor Stimson return to Churchmead and experience a tour of how Churchmead conducted its RE lessons and promoted its distinctive ethos which SACRE members had experienced before the meeting.

ACTION: Councillor Stimson to visit Churchmead again to experience its educational ethos.

(Ravinder Singh Zandu left the meeting at 6:28pm)

10 Training opportunities/events

When asked by the Chair about the Strictly RE training, Dai Prendiville said that it went well though he had found it slightly unsatisfactory. He added that he attended a session arranged by the Jewish Centre in London, which he considered was better. Thomas Kingsley-Jones also attended the session.

Barbara Meaney stated that she attended a one-and-a-half hour long RE Hubs training, a new project seeking to build relationships between advisers, dioceses, universities, SACREs, LAs, governors, MATs, teaching school hubs,

places of interest, school speakers and more. It aimed to help participants understand the purpose and context of RE/R&W/RVE in England and Wales and offered top tips for working well with schools by hosting visits or visiting schools. Anne Andrews then stated that if any representatives from faith groups were interested in this training session, they let her know. She stated the dates of the sessions would be in the NASACRE newsletter.

ACTION: SACRE members to inform Anne Andrews of their interest in the RE Hubs training.

The Chair stated that she went on a NASACRE chair training course, which involved experienced SACRE chairs explaining what made their SACREs work.

On the Network meetings, Anne Andrews reported that it was a success despite more people having signed up than attended. She hoped that the next Network meeting would be in-person but required a venue. Laura Dexter offered to provide a venue for the meeting.

ACTION: Anne Andrews to email Laura Dexter on a venue for the next Network meeting.

Anne Andrews mentioned that there was a NASACRE session on Collective Worship the following Tuesday (14 March 2023) which she recommended SACRE members attend.

11 Advice for Ramadan

Anne Andrews explained that the advice on Ramadan attached to the report was produced by a Muslim NASACRE executive member. When asked by Anne Andrews, Saghir Ahmed thought the advice was good though he expressed concern that Ramadan took place during the exam period. Anne Andrews responded that Ramadan would finish around 23rd April in 2023, before exams started. In 2024, she explained, Ramadan may impact mock exams, but it was unlikely to affect summer exams.

12 Membership update and proposed constitutional revision

Item 12 (Membership update and proposed constitutional revision) was combined with Item 6 (Membership).

13 Census 2021 and issues arising from this

The Chair wished to put Item 13 (Census 2021 and issues arising from this) on hold, but Anthony Lewis requested that it be discussed next because he needed to leave the meeting. The Chair agreed to quickly go through the item.

Anthony Lewis commented that the 2021 census showed that society was trending towards being on-religious but stated that there was a lack of knowledge of non-religiosity. Anne Andrews acknowledged this but stated that SACRE had to work within in the legal advice framework whereby the religious traditions in Britain were Christian while also taking into account other religions.

(Anthony Lewis left the meeting at 6:45pm)

14 NASACRE AGM - 23 May

The Chair pointed out that the NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education) AGM in London was Monday 22 May 2023, not 23 May 2023. She and Anne Andrews then asked who could attend this conference as two delegates needed to attend. Barbara Meaney said she would go. She then researched on her phone and told colleagues about the subjects likely to be covered. There was a space for a second delegate.

The Chair suggested that SACRE members could email herself or Anne Andrews to express an interest in attending the NASACRE AGM.

ACTION: SACRE members to email the Chair or Anne Andrews to express an interest in attending the NASACRE AGM in London.

Anne Andrews also requested the NASACRE survey be circulated to SACRE members of Group C for them to complete.

ACTION: NASACRE survey to be circulated to SACRE members in Group C.

15 NASACRE FOI Request

The Chair explained that she was informed by Clive Haines that the freedom of information request from NASACRE had been dealt with and the budget was altered in accordance with this.

16 Budget Update

The Chair stated that she was informed by Clive Haines that there was a current underspend in the budget. A deadline of 20th March 2023 had been set. The Chair expressed the wish that some of this money should be spent in a way that it would help the schools.

17 SACRE Annual Report

Anne Andrews asked members if they were content for the SACRE Annual Report to be sent off without the RE exam results data but with a note stating that they were not available from the Local Authority, explaining she had to send it out by the end of the week.

The Chair stated that she would seek to contact Clive Haines to acquire the RE exam results.

ACTION: The Chair to contact and acquire the RE exam results from Clive Haines.

18 Pan-Berkshire Hub Update

Anne Andrews explained that a meeting took place in February 2023 which agreed that there should be a series of faith group conversations involving members of SACREs across Berkshire. This would be a preliminary exercise in the lead up to the review of the Agreed Syllabus.

She reported that the Bahai, Buddhist and Humanist films were almost ready, and these would be uploaded to the website. These would be paid out of the SACRE Hub budget.

On the SACRE Hub budget, there was £14,000 in the budget, which meant SACRE could afford to do a proper syllabus review across the six local authorities.

19 Ofsted/SIAMS Reports

The Chair explained that she had requested the names of the schools which had been inspected by Ofsted since September 2022 from Clive Haines. She received Ofsted reports from 3 schools, including Hilltop First School, Dedworth Middle School and Lowbrook Academy. The first two schools received positive feedback from Ofsted, though the report for Lowbrook Academy could not be found.

20 Exam Results

The content of this item was discussed in Item 17 – SACRE Annual Report.

21 Any Other Business

Anne Andrews explained that she was arranging a Respect and Tolerance Day event on 6 June 2023 for primary and secondary school trainees. She then invited any SACRE members to attend this session, stating it would be beneficial to have religious and Humanist representatives present.

David Saunders pointed out that the financial numbers under Budget Update item in the minutes from the last meeting appeared incorrect.

ACTION: SACRE Clerk to amend the figures in consultation with Clive Haines

22 Dates Of Future Meetings

The Chair said she was arranging to have the next meeting at Cheapside CE Primary School.

SACRE attendees noted future meeting dates:

- Tuesday 13th June 2023 – Cheapside CE Primary School, Ascot
- Monday 11th September 2023
- Monday 4th December 2023 (Virtual via Zoom)
- Monday 4th March 2024

The meeting, which began at 5.02 pm, ended at 7.02 pm