

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

4 NOVEMBER 2014

PRESENT: Mike Gammage (Chairman), Karen Butler (Vice-Chairman), Louisa Ceska, Deborah Firth, Ila Gangotra, Felicity Gunn, Hilary Harris, Joan Hicks, Liz Jenkins, Councillor Richard Kellaway, Nick Lowe, Barbara Meaney, Ravinder Singh and Anthea West.

Officers in attendance: Anne Andrews, Rob Cowan, Simon Evry and Jo Fageant.

ACTION

1 Welcome and Appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman

The SACRE voted on the appointment of a Chairman and Vice Chairman for the academic year. It was agreed that Mike Gammage should be the Chairman of the SACRE and Karen Butler should be the Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Mike Gammage be the Chairman of the SACRE and Karen Butler be the Vice-Chairman of the SACRE.

2 Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Natasha Airey, Councillor Eileen Quick, Melody Erasmus and Christina Sansom.

3 Minutes

Members approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2014, subject to the following:

- Page i, in the names of attendees, "Joan Hick" be amended to read "Joan Hicks".
- Page i, item 3: "these academies still had to provide RE in the curriculum or daily act of collective worship for all pupils" be amended to read "these academies still had to provide RE in the curriculum and daily act of collective worship for all pupils". Also, the sentence "however it did not have to be wholly or mainly of a Christian characteristic" be removed as this was inaccurate.

It was noted that Councillors Kellaway, Quick and Airey had not met to discuss the hub initiative due to illness. However it was noted that it was independent of the Council and it would be organized by the 6 Berkshire SACRES.

4 Membership Update

The SACRE noted that, since the last meeting there had been a number of changes to the SACRE membership.

In Group A 'Christian Denominations and other religions' it was noted that Dalwyn Atwell (Methodist) and Jasvinder Bhogal (Sikh) had stepped down as members of the SACRE. Ms Bhogal had been successfully replaced by Ravinder Singh as the representative for the Sikh faith. Anthea West had taken the vacant position of representative for the Buddhist faith. It was noted that there were still vacancies for the Free Church/Methodist and the Roman

Catholic Church faiths.

There had been no change to Group B 'The Church of England'.

In Group C 'Associations Representing Teachers', Barbara Meaney (NASUWT), Liz Jenkins (ATL) and Deborah Firth (NUT) had joined the SACRE. However there were still vacancies for NAHT and VOICE.

There had been no change to Group D 'The Local Authority'.

It was noted the Membership of the SACRE was as follows:

Group A:	Christian Denominations and other religions
Free Churches	Nick Lowe Melody Erasmus <i>Vacancy</i>
Roman Catholic Church:	<i>Vacancy</i>
Hinduism:	Ila Gongotra
Islam	Saghir Ahmed
Judaism	Hilary Harris
Sikhism	Ravinder Singh
Buddhist	Anthea West
Baha'i	Mike Gammage
Group B:	The Church of England
	Felicity Gunn Rev Joan Hicks Karen Butler
Group C:	Associations Representing Teachers
NASUWT	Barbara Meaney
NAHT	<i>Vacancy</i>
ATL	Liz Jenkins
VOICE	<i>Vacancy</i>
BASH	Mrs Louise Ceska
NUT	Deborah Firth
Group D:	The Local Authority
	Cllr Dee Quick Cllr Natasha Airey Cllr Richard Kellaway
Local Authority Officers:	Mr Simon Evry
Professional Advisor:	Jo Fageant
Clerk:	Rob Cowan

5 2015 Accord Inclusive School Award

The SACRE considered the 2015 Accord Inclusive School Awards. It was noted that the award promoted best practice in inclusion. Accord wanted to ensure that schools were doing all they could to promote community cohesion. The Chairman believed the award was just the thing the SACRE should be promoting to schools or suggesting that the Local Authority should be promoting.

It was noted that the deadline for submissions was 7 December 2014. Although this was short notice the Chairman was of the opinion the award should be on the agenda for the SACRE's consideration.

The SACRE considered how information regarding the award was communicated to schools, specifically, RE leaders and head teachers. The reference materials stated that the application process was as simple as possible with most questions having been already answered in information the school published about itself, material provided to OFSTED, the school prospectus and newsletters. However this was described as an oversimplification.

The teaching representatives noted that they were aware of the award. Furthermore, the information asked for on the application form could be provided relatively easily. However the form was described as repetition and another piece of paper to fill out. It was suggested that the award be communicated through meetings of head teachers and RE leaders who could then take it back to their own schools and decide whether or not to apply. It was believed that the award could be beneficial to schools, however it was highlighted that one of the previous award winners had been rated as 'requiring improvement' by OFSTED. It was noted that it would be interesting to know if a school had moved from requiring improvement to good as a result of its commitment to inclusion.

The SACRE noted that a RE co-ordinators meeting was taking place on the same week of the SACRE's meeting and information about the award would be shared with attendees.

6 NASACRE Toolkit

The SACRE considered the NASACRE (National Association of SACRES) self-assessment toolkit. The Chairman described the toolkit as an opportunity for the SACRE to assess what it was good at, what could be improved and also to consider what their priorities should be. There were five sections to the toolkit. These were:

1. Promoting improvement in the standards, the quality of teaching, and provision in RE.
2. Evaluating the effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus.
3. Promoting improvement in the provision and quality of collective worship.
4. Managing the SACRE and building the partnership between the SACRE, the LA and other key stakeholders.
5. Contributing to cohesion across the community and the promotion of social and racial harmony.

As each section would take significant time to discuss, the SACRE agreed to only consider the first section at the meeting. The remaining sections would then be considered at future meetings, one section at a time.

The SACRE read through section one, 'Standards and Quality of Provision of Religious Education'. Section one questioned how effectively the SACRE, in partnership with the LA, evaluated standards and the quality of provision for RE in schools. Also, it questioned how effective the strategy was for improving standards and the quality of provision.

It was noted that, in principle, every pupil was entitled to RE of the highest quality. At its best RE was one of the most popular, relevant, stimulating and truly educative elements in the curriculum. That potential gave SACREs both a benchmark for their aspirations, and a spur for their actions. A core duty of a SACRE was to gain an overview of the quality of the RE provision in local authority maintained schools and to develop effective strategies to promote the highest standards.

In the light of the current inspection culture of partnership and self-evaluation, SACREs would need to approach achieving that overview with some sensitivity and astuteness. Information to assist the SACRE in carrying out its role was likely to come from a range of sources. This might include:

- Public examination results.
- Reports from School Improvement Partners.
- Analysing questionnaires.
- Sharing of information from subject self-evaluation forms as appropriate, and in agreement with schools.
- Feedback from professional development activities.
- Presentations to SACRE from local teachers.

Nick Lowe questioned whether RE was a popular subject in schools. Teaching representatives believed that it was popular though it was noted that it was dependant on how it was taught. A Level RE was described as enrolling a good number of students. Councillor Richard Kellaway believed RE was a good subject to have studied when students were applying to university.

The SACRE questioned whether their remit covered academies. It was noted that the Local Authority had an over-arching responsibility for all schools in the Borough including academies. However the SACRE's professional advisor, Jo Fageant, explained that in the case of RE, it was more complicated. Community schools and voluntary controlled schools were required by law to use the Local Authority's RE syllabus which the SACRE had responsibility for. Therefore the SACRE was responsible for advising and monitoring the quality of provision in those schools.

In a voluntary aided school, RE was the responsibility of the governors of the school. Some voluntary aided schools were faith schools. Church of England schools did not count themselves as faith schools as they were there to serve the whole community, though they were voluntary aided schools. In these cases governors would often take advice from their diocese or a larger body. The SACRE was not responsible for these schools. However in the Anglican Diocese of Oxford voluntary aided schools were advised to follow the Windsor and Maidenhead syllabus therefore, by default, these schools could look to the SACRE for advice and support.

Free schools and academies were described as different again. These schools were free to use or not use the locally agreed syllabus. However, it would be written into their funding agreement that they had to provide RE in a programme which reflected the religious traditions of Great Britain which were mainly Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions. If the school had a religious foundation it would be released to do more of what they wanted. Ms Fageant noted that rather than starting from scratch, academies and free schools could use the already available Local Authority syllabus and therefore may look to the SACRE for support and guidance.

Therefore, officially the SACRE did not have a remit over free schools, voluntary aided school and academies. However these schools might choose to look to the SACRE for support. This however raised questions regarding funding.

The Chairman requested the SACRE be provided with a spreadsheet which outlined all the different schools and the type of school they were, be it a free school, maintained school, community school or academy etc. Simon Evry, Service Leader for Education Standards stated that he would provide the SACRE with this information. He noted that Education Standards worked with all 64 schools in the Borough.

The SACRE considered the questions posed in section one of the toolkit. Each question could be answered as either developing, established or advanced.

Question A concerned RE provision across the Local Authority. The SACRE reflected on how effectively they gained information about RE provision in schools and put in place strategies to support the delivery of pupil entitlement.

The SACRE concluded that they were developing. They had little knowledge of which schools were fulfilling pupil entitlement in RE because local processes were insufficient to gather such information. Teachers felt the SACRE had only provided them with the syllabus and no information had been requested from teachers by the SACRE.

Question B concerned the standards of achievement and public examination entries. The SACRE reflected on how they used information about standards and examinations to target support and training for schools.

Mr Evry informed the SACRE that a lot of data was collected and shared with Councillors and schools, however that covered core subjects and did not include RE. It was noted that there was no formal context for reflecting on outcomes in RE. It was also noted as doubtful that results could be obtained from Key Stages 1 to 3. Catholic schools were required to have data regarding Key Stages 1 and 2 as this was evidence for their inspection process, however the SACRE did not have a remit for voluntary aided schools.

The SACRE concluded that they were developing. They noted that they had limited knowledge of standards in primary and secondary schools including examination entries. The SACRE had no clear strategy to address that.

All Key Stage 4 students in Windsor and Maidenhead were required to follow an externally accredited course in RE. It was noted that data was available regarding GCSE and A Level RE, however it was difficult to analyse. For example it was difficult to compare results from a school, for example, where RE was an elective subject and only 25 students took the course, with a school where RE was compulsory and 100% of students took the course. Furthermore, some schools required students to study RE GCSE in year 10 and some in year 11. However it was noted that the SACRE should know which of the different approaches schools were using.

Question C concerned the quality of learning and teaching. The SACRE Reflected on how well the SACRE used knowledge of quality of learning and teaching to target support appropriately.

It was noted that the SACRE was established. Regular, termly coordinators meetings were held. Information about national courses and also courses provided by local providers were circulated. Information was not collected from external advisers or SEF but teachers did provide feedback. For example, meetings with faith groups had been organised in response to requests from teachers. It was expressed that the SACRE also had ambitions to be advanced and be more robust.

Question D concerned the quality of leadership and management, including the provision and management of resources. The SACRE questioned to what extent the SACRE collected and used information about the effectiveness of senior and middle leadership of RE in its schools.

It was noted that the SACRE was established as there was sufficient contact with teachers and pupils. There was also debate regarding how to improve teaching and learning through network meetings. The Chairman suggested that to be more effective greater structure was required with in depth, analytical reports. It was suggested that the information was available however it had not been presented to the SACRE in detail.

The Chairman stated that the quality of leadership was a delicate area. It was suggested that the SACRE write to the schools and open doors. It was noted that the SACRE would have to be invited to a school and could not impose a visit on a school.

Question E concerned the recruitment and retention of skilled specialist RE staff. The SACRE questioned the extent they used information about specialist provision in their schools to target training and support recruitment.

It was noted that the SACRE was developing. It was suggested that this question was less of a focus for the SACRE as it was the role of the schools. Mr Evry noted that it was not the role of the Local Authority to involve itself in the recruitment of staff though it would support schools in the recruitment of head teachers. He noted that the recruitment of subject specialists was a problem but not just in RE.

It was questioned whether the SACRE could establish a relationship with a teacher training college. Mr Evry noted that schemes such as Schools Direct did this, however it was noted by Ms Fageant that that system had not worked well for recruiting RE teachers.

Question F concerned the relations with academies and other non-LA maintained schools. The SACRE questioned the extent to which they developed a pro-active strategy in relation to academies and other non-LA maintained schools in its area. The SACRE concluded that they were developing though again it was believed this was not a focus of the SACRE at the current time.

Having considered the questions A-F, the SACRE concluded with the following comments:

Successes included training which had been organised at the end of March 2014 in Cookham. Work had been done regarding networks at both primary and secondary level.

Ms Fageant noted that, from her experience working with different SACREs, the SACRE in Windsor and Maidenhead worked to a similar standard as others regarding training and support. She noted that there was work done via

delegated responsibility to herself as the professional advisor, with administrative support provided by Elaine Norstrom, Education Standards Clerical Officer. Also, issues raised at coordinators meetings were addressed. However this was hindered by the fact that different teachers attended each meeting.

Hilary Harris noted that one issue was, though things were being done, the SACRE were not informed. She felt the relationship between schools and the SACRE was difficult. She questioned whether this was something the SACRE needed to work on or just accept.

Teaching representatives believed that the focus of the questions had different levels of priority. For example recruitment was a low priority. It was noted that the SACRE's strength was providing information and support which was the best thing it could be doing. The issue was getting information from teachers however providing feedback would generate extra work. A repeat of the March event was requested, which offered the opportunity to discuss issues, ideas and resources with colleagues outside of a school situation. It was noted that the speakers were also beneficial and valued.

Ms Fageant noted that she had undertaken less work for secondary provision. This was because there was a smaller number of secondary RE teachers and speakers for secondary RE would have to be heavily subsidised by the SACRE. It was possible to share this with other SACREs who shared a syllabus, i.e. the Berkshire 'Hub'. It was noted that the provision of secondary teacher training across the country was fraught with difficulty. Take up was described as abysmal. For example, the March conference was open to both secondary and primary RE teachers but less than 20 secondary teachers attended from across all the secondary schools from Berkshire.

It was suggested 10-15 minutes videos be created and uploaded to youtube.com, or the SACRE or diocese website. Thus allowing teachers to access these in their own time and removed the need to travel. It was noted that RE online (www.reonline.org.uk) provided a wide variety of resources. Interactive chat sessions and webinars were also already offered. However it was suggested the SACRE could do a better job of making teachers aware of what was available.

The Chairman questioned what could be done to increase knowledge of what was going on to give a feed of updates from RE. Mr Evry noted that there were four advisors who spent between 2-28 days in schools however there was pressure to focus on OFSTED outcomes and core subjects. It was suggested a questionnaire could be sent out to schools, questioning if the school had a specialist teacher, how RE was provided for example weekly or in blocks.

Ms Fageant suggested a formal report regarding what training had been offered would allow the SACRE to build a record of what had taken place. It was also noted that feedback from teachers would be very useful.

It was noted that Ms Norstrom would have a spreadsheet showing which schools had attended training sessions and this information could be provided to the SACRE. Also, SACRE meetings could take place in schools with members of the SACRE attending training sessions and report back to SACRE. However the timing would have to be right. Ila Gongotra noted that members of religious communities who went into schools was also of benefit to pupils. Members of the SACRE were also welcome to attend the termly coordinator meetings. Louise Ceska stated that she would welcome any

member of the SACRE who wished to see what was done at Newlands Girls School, where she was the head teacher.

ACTION: Simon Evry provide the SACRE with a spreadsheet which outlines all the different schools and the type of school they were, be it a free school, maintained school, community school or academy etc.

Simon Evry

ACTION: Anne Andrews, Simon Evry, Jo Fageant and Mike Gammage create a sub-group to crystallise the discussion regarding the toolkit into specific conclusions and actions and circulate to SACRE members.

Anne Andrews, Simon Evry, Jo Fageant and Mike Gammage.

7 Budget Update

The SACRE received a budget update from Simon Evry. Mr Evry noted that the SACRE had a budget of £6,200.00. Some of this money was committed to Jo Fageant's fee as professional advisor to the SACRE. Some more money was used to pay for the administrative services provided by Elaine Norstrom. It was noted that Ms Norstrom was a member of the business support team for Children's Services.

However there was at least £4,000.00 of uncommitted funds available to the SACRE to spend which needed to be spent by the end of March.

The SACRE were reminded that the March event of the previous year had spent a lot of the budget however it had generated an income which left the budget with a surplus.

It was suggested another conference could be organised.

8 A Scheme of Work for RE from the Diocese of Oxford

The SACRE received a Scheme of Work for RE from the Diocese of Oxford, which was presented by Anne Andrews who had written the scheme.

It was noted that the scheme covered the requirements of the Pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus, covering Key Stages 1 and 2 (primary only). The syllabus itself was described as 9 questions for Key Stage 1 and 10 questions for Key Stage 2, however there was no set content.

The scheme turned the syllabus into something they could take into the classroom and use. The scheme covered the most common concepts that were taught in RE and related in each of the units to at least two of the questions from the agreed syllabus.

The scheme encouraged teachers to teach using the enquiry method of teaching, largely led by concepts and asking open ended questions. The scheme contained 36 units for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, each with a midterm plan and assessment sheet. Feedback from schools currently using the scheme was described as positive. In line with the syllabus, the scheme covered Christianity and Judaism in Key Stage 1, and also covered Hinduism and Sikhism in Key Stage 2.

It was noted that there was a cost for the scheme. The scheme had been

made available to the schools included in the service level agreement with the Oxford Diocese. Other schools could purchase the scheme for £200.00 and this included a twilight training session.

Schools in Windsor and Maidenhead were aware of the scheme as it had been discussed at the previous coordinator meeting. It was noted that it was tricky to divide the scheme between first and middle schools as the scheme did not go into years 7 and 8. It was noted that Dedworth Middle School had purchased the scheme.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: The SACRE supported the advisory team promoting the scheme with schools.

9 Feedback from the Joint SACREs Conference in June 2014

The SACRE received a verbal update from Jo Fageant, regarding feedback from the Joint SACRE Conference which took place in June 2014. The Conference had considered the national proposal to introduce of a regional hub to support RE.

The initiative had been described as contentious as the SACRE was already a hub with the remit to support RE, therefore there was already a network of hubs with a remit to support RE. However organisations supporting the regional hub proposal did not necessarily support SACREs.

Money was available to support the development of a hub to support RE. At the Joint SACRE Conference, attendees discussed the 6 Berkshire SACREs working closer together, though not necessarily all the time but for specific costed projects which could be shared across the six SACREs.

The outcome of the discussion was universal support for the idea that the Chairmen of the 6 SACREs meet in the autumn term. At the meeting, the Chairmen would consider what the 6 SACREs might work together on and then put together a proposal. Then a bid for money (approximately £2,000.00) could be made in the next term using the proposal.

10 The Annual SACRE Report 2013-14

The SACRE considered the Annual SACRE Report 2013-14. Ms Fageant, who had drafted the report, noted that there was currently no set format. This was because there was no longer any analysis of the report being carried out.

The report was of use to the schools served by the SACRE, explaining what the SACRE had done over the last year. The links found in the report were described as useful, providing a tremendous amount of resources.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: The SACRE approved the Report.

11 Planning for the Future: What We Want To Do and Future Professional Support

The SACRE considered what they wanted to do in the future. It was highlighted that another Conference such as the one which had taken place in March could be organised. Work would have to take place quickly however if a good venue and speaker were to be used. The work could be delegated to either Ms Fageant as the professional advisor or a sub-group of the SACRE.

It was suggested that a more substantial item be on the agenda for the next

meeting where the SACRE considered what it wished to do over the next three years. However this might be influenced by the decision regarding the hub.

It was also noted that Jo Fageant would retire from her position at the Oxford Diocese in March 2015. However the Diocese would continue to offer professional support, should the SACRE choose to use it, and the role would be taken over by Anne Andrews. It was decided that Anne Andrews take over Jo Fageant's role when Ms Fageant retired.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: Anne Andrews become Professional Advisor to the SACRE following the retirement of the current Professional Advisor, Jo Fageant in March 2015.

ACTION: Jo Fageant to organise another Conference similar to the March 2014 Conference.

Jo Fageant

12 Dates of Future Meetings

The SACRE considered whether they should meet quarterly to be more effective. It was suggested that this be the case in the next municipal year. It was noted that the SACRE could also organise sub-groups.

The SACRE noted the dates of future meetings as:

- 5 March 2015

The meeting, which began at 6.00pm, ended at 8.00pm.