

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

8 December 2022

PRESENT: Karen Butler (Chairman), Barbara Meaney (Vice-Chairman), Ila Gangotra, Hilary Harris, Ravinder Singh Zandu, Chris Sayers, Michael Gammage, David Saunders, Laura Dexter, Clare Roberts, Thomas Kingsley-Jones, Dai Prendiville, Councillor Donna Stimson, Councillor Julian Sharpe, Councillor Shamsul Shelim and Anthony Lewis

Officers in attendance: Anne Andrews, Clive Haines and Mark Beeley

ACTION

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and thanked members of SACRE for their support in moving the start time to 5pm, which would hopefully allow headteachers to join.

She also extended a warm welcome to two new members of SACRE: David Saunders and Laura Dexter.

2 Opening Reflection

Ila Gangotra shared her lived experience when herself and her family moved to the UK, their early experiences of living and how things had changed between then and now.

3 Apologies For Absence

An apology for absence had been received from Sara Chesterfield Terry. Ravinder Singh had notified that he would be late to the meeting.

4 Minutes Of Meeting on 06/09/22

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

5 Matters arising

Anne Andrews said that she had an extensive email conversation with Councillor Baldwin about the requirements for someone to be appointed as a member of SACRE.

The Chair confirmed that the letter had been sent out to headteachers after the September meeting. She had also written a letter to the Desborough College headteacher about the promising progress of RE at the school.

Mark Beeley confirmed that the SACRE newsletter had been sent out as part of the RBWM Members Update.

6 Membership Update

Mark Beeley said that the national body representing the Free Churches and Blenheim Church in Maidenhead were helping to find a representative for SACRE. He had also made contact with the Windsor Methodist Church and

they were interested in filling a vacancy if possible.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to check before the March meeting if there was any update from contacts representing the Free Churches.

Barbara Meaney said that she was happy to chat with anyone in the Windsor area about being a representative on SACRE.

Clive Haines said that the headteachers had suggested that the position for their representative should be shared, rather than one person filling the position. For the secondary headteacher representative, it would be an academy as all schools in RBWM apart from Churchmead were now academies.

ACTION – Clive Haines to confirm which headteacher would be attending the March meeting.

7 Induction Training

The Chair said that Laura Dexter and David Saunders had received a copy of the SACRE member handbook but had joined after the September induction training which was offered by NASACRE. The next induction session would be taking place in June 2023. The Chair said that SACRE paid a one-off fee, which allowed all members to take advantage of any of the training sessions which were run by NASACRE. Anyone interested in attending a session just needed to email mark.beeley@rbwm.gov.uk.

8 Other training opportunities/events

The Chair said that she had joined a recent RE primary network meeting, which was led by Anne Andrews.

Laura Dexter said that the network was helpful to be able to talk to other people about RE.

Anne Andrews said that the next meeting of the network would take place on Thursday 2nd February 2023.

The Chair explained that she had attended a NASACRE training session on the future of SACREs, which had also been attended by the former Education Secretary Charles Clarke. He had said not to expect any paperwork or legislative change because of the political uncertainty. The Chair had also attended the session on how to 'use pupil and teacher voice effectively in your SACRE'.

Barbara Meaney had also attended this session, Linda Rudge had helped to run the session and she was part of the RE Quality Mark team. This was an RE assessment system available for all schools to complete. It had helpful materials that both schools and SACRE could use. One piece of material was a questionnaire which could go out to pupils and allow their views to be heard. The session reiterated the importance of including pupil voice as part of teacher planning.

The Chair added that she had found the session very interesting, particularly hearing about some of the collaborative work which had been taking place between some schools.

Barbara Meaney said that most schools had a school council, it could be beneficial for SACRE to link in with school councils to allow it to hear pupils' voice.

Anne Andrews reminded colleagues that Strictly RE would be taking place on the last weekend in January. SACRE would be funding places for any teachers who were interested in attending.

Clive Haines suggested that he could send the section on Strictly RE from the SACRE newsletter out to teachers in RBWM as a reminder. He also proposed that the Chair could attend a leadership forum and speak to headteachers about how school councils could come together.

ACTION – Clive Haines to send out reminder of Strictly RE to RBWM schools.

Dai Prendiville commented that he would be attending Strictly RE. He was disappointed it was virtual as he preferred in person events but even being virtual it was a great event and allowed teachers to share some good ideas.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones had attended Strictly RE last year and felt it was very beneficial, he highly recommended it to other teachers.

The Chair had suggested that it would be useful to keep a list of which SACRE members had attended NASACRE training sessions, so that SACRE could evaluate the benefits of paying the blanket fee for training.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to keep up to date list of attendees on NASACRE training sessions.

9 Feedback from Teachers

Laura Dexter said that Furze Platt had been very busy, they had recently introduced Discovery RE and this had been matched to the syllabus. She had recently completed some learning walks, so she had a good idea of what was happening in the classroom. Laura Dexter commented that next steps were to explore the local community and also to have some visitors into the school but this had proved to be challenging so far. Another focus was what RE looked like in the early years, particularly exposure and experiences. Discovery RE was being used in a creative way. It was a prime time for coughs and colds and there had been some quite challenging behaviour to deal with too.

Clare Roberts explained that Cheapside had lots going on in the build up to Christmas, with nativities and carol concerts being held. The school council were preparing to hold an RE day for the whole school which would be held in January. Links were being created so that if a topic was being taught at the same time, there would be a link between year groups. There were significant demands on staff having to deal with behaviour and providing appropriate support for children with SEN.

Barbara Meaney said that St Edwards had been busy rehearsing for the advent service which would be held shortly. She echoed the comments made about children with SEN needs, there had been a big increase in the number since lockdown. Behaviour had been challenging and had been primarily around basic issues, for example sitting on a chair without fidgeting. This could be a negative impact of a lack of routine during lockdown.

Dai Prendiville, from Desborough College, said that year 7 and 8 were

following the same RE curriculum. The pupils were currently participating in '60 second hotspots', where they had to debate in front of the class for a minute, without any notes, on whether Abraham or Moses was the true founder of Judaism. Year 9 were being given a flavour of what the GCSE course was like. Dai Prendiville had also held an assembly on Hinduism for year 9, 10 and 11 at the school.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones said that it had been a busy term at Churchmead, a new member of staff had joined the department. He was looking forward to hosting SACRE in March, a tour of the school was also planned. There had been a focus on the implementation of the visual curriculum map, this had also been shared with the students. Student voice had become a big focus and this was done across the RE department.

10 Draft SACRE Development Plan and training proposals

The Chair outlined the SACRE development plan for 2022-23. Some key actions and priorities from the plan included:

- Identify local authority development priorities and share them with SACRE members.
- Where possible, link the development plan to the local authority plan.
- Add costings to the development plan.
- Increase SACRE budget in line with strategic development needs.
- Provide opportunities for teachers, students and representatives of faiths and worldview communities to share their insights and experiences at meetings.
- Hold SACRE meetings in a variety of venues.
- Shorten the turnaround time for the publication of SACRE minutes.
- Promote meaningful contact between SACRE members outside of meetings.
- Involve SACRE members in the regular review of the development plan.
- Provide opportunities for the induction of new SACRE members.
- Introduce systems for successful planning for SACRE members.
- Strengthen the role of SACRE as a 'critical friend' to the local authority.
- Hear the views of students about their experience of RE.
- Establish a universal approach to the auditing of provision of RE in schools.
- Diocesan advisor to use feedback from RE network meetings to inform SACRE and local authority training programme.
- Local authority officer to share feedback on RE following Ofsted inspections.
- Ensure that all members of SACRE were familiar with the current syllabus for RE.

The Chair asked for any feedback or comments that any members of SACRE had on the development plan.

Ila Gangotra asked what the difference was between an assembly and collective worship.

Barbara Meaney explained that generally speaking, an assembly could be about any topic. Collective worship was about spirituality and having time to reflect.

Anne Andrews added that the definition of collective worship and an assembly

were common misconceptions.

The Chair proposed that the development plan should start. She would look to bring a progress report to the March meeting of SACRE.

11 Summary of the RBWM Corporate Plan

Clive Haines explained that there were three main objectives in the RBWM corporate plan; thriving communities, inspiring places and a council trusted to deliver its promises. The education team fell under thriving communities and had considered how to champion innovation and partnership working. Aims included:

- Empower and enable individuals, communities and businesses to maximise their potential.
- Invest in prevention and intervene early to address problems before they escalate.
- Shape our service-delivery around our communities' diverse needs and put customers at the heart of all we do.
- Make the most effective use of resources - delivering the best value for money.
- Promote awareness of a sustainable and biodiverse environment across all of our decision-making.
- Promote health and wellbeing, and focus on reducing inequalities, across all areas.

Under thriving communities, the council had some key performance indicators:

- At least 95% of the borough's education settings were judged to be Good or Outstanding.
- An increase in the attainment ranking for children in care, SEND and children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in GCSE English and Maths.
- More families access Early Help and fewer families require crisis intervention: over 90% of Early Help interventions were closed with a positive outcome.

The council aimed to give every child and young person in the borough the best possible start in life, accessing good or outstanding education in all settings. Some children – including those in receipt of free school meals, with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), and children in care – tended to achieve less well than their peers, without additional support. RBWM planned to prioritise raising the attainment of these children, so that they were supported to make a successful transition into adulthood.

12 Budget Update

The SACRE budget for the year was £6,200, £2,300 had been spent already so there was £2,900 left for the remainder of the year. The main areas of expenditure had been on the diocese advisor, covering the cost of SACRE delegates attending the NASACRE AGM and the annual subscription to NASACRE. The annual fee had also been paid to the Berkshire Hub.

13 Pan-Berkshire Hub Update

Anne Andrews updated SACRE on the work of the Hub, there were two main strands of work. More films had been made, the films on Humianism had been

sent to those involved in the production and the notes to accompany the films were in the process of being produced. Films had also been made at the Buddhist Priory in Reading and also by the Baha'i community. Once the films were ready, Anne Andrews would speak to NATRE about getting them uploaded to the website. The Hub was also considering the syllabus review, legally the review needed to begin in 2023. All faith representatives on SACRE had received a concept chart to fill in, this would be used to understand whether the current questions on the syllabus were correct. This was the first part of the syllabus review. By reviewing the content the Hub would be able to get an idea of what might need to be changed. Once this stage had been completed, the Hub would ask the teacher representatives for their views.

Anthony Lewis asked Anne Andrews if she had received the concept chart which he had filled out. He thanked Anne Andrews for her work on the Humanist film which had recently been completed.

Anne Andrews confirmed that she had. Some positive comments had been made whilst appreciating that it could be difficult to answer some of the questions from a Humanist perspective.

Michael Gammage shared his experience of creating the Baha'i film. The questions had been challenging but hopefully the films would be a useful resource for teachers.

Hilary Harris agreed and found the questions to be thought provoking. It had been an enjoyable experience.

14 Ofsted/SIAMS Reports

St Edwards Middle School in Windsor had recently had an Ofsted inspection, however there was no mention of RE. Barbara Meaney said that the focus from the inspectors was on personal development. She had tried to speak about RE during the inspection but it was not included in the final report.

Anne Andrews said that there were five RBWM schools on the list which were due to have their SIAMS inspection this year. In September 2023, there would be a new SIAMS framework.

15 Any Other Business

Anthony Lewis shared some data from the 2021 census, which showed that 33% of people in Berkshire classed themselves as non-religious. This was a significant proportion and Anthony Lewis felt that it was important to consider the implications of this in the RE classroom.

The Chair said that the topic could be discussed further at the next meeting.

ACTION – Topic to be discussed at the March meeting of SACRE.

16 Discussion of Section 3 of the NASACRE SEF: The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus

The Chair suggested that it would be beneficial to have a general conversation about the agreed syllabus.

Councillor Stimson said that she had recently attended a session at Maidenhead Mosque about religion and what it meant to people. All religions were teaching kindness to themselves and each other, this was the core

principle.

Anne Andrews said that the syllabus was never designed to be picked up and used to teach from. It was meant to be a foundation document which schools used to build their own schemes of work. Some schools used the questions from Discovery RE and matched them to the questions which were used in the syllabus.

Dai Prendiville noted that a significant proportion of the syllabus was focused on Christianity, with less devoted to the other main religions. Time was limited and teachers had to balance lessons against the scheme of work and locally agreed syllabus to make sure that all content was covered. He noted the points made by Anthony Lewis on the need to recognise the non-religious viewpoint, which was becoming more popular.

Laura Dexter said that RBWM ran training days which centred on subjects like English and Maths, and that a day on RE could be a useful opportunity for teachers to improve their professional knowledge.

Anne Andrews suggested that as there was money left in the SACRE budget, an event could be held for RE leaders and teachers to come together.

ACTION – Anne Andrews to explore this as an option with Clive Haines.

17 Dates Of Future Meetings

The next meeting would be held on Monday 6th March 2023, from 5pm-7pm, at Churchmead School, Priory Way, Datchet, Berkshire, SL3 9JQ.

The meeting, which began at 5.00 pm, ended at 7.00 pm