

Lancashire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 17th June, 2013 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'D' - County Hall, Preston

Present

Christian and other Religious Groups appropriately reflecting the Principal Traditions in the Area

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| Roman Catholic Church | Ms J Busby |
| | Mr B McMullen |
| The Free Churches Group | Mrs A Tidswell |
| | Mr C Wills |
| Buddhism | Kelsang Pagpa |
| Hindu | Mrs H Shukla |
| Judaism | Rabbi D Braunold |
| Islam | Mr H Mulla |
| Teachers Associations | Ms J Crabtree (NUT) |
| | Ms S Greenhow (NASUWT) |
| | Mr P Martin (ASCL) |
| | Chair |
| Church of England | Mrs A Robinson (ATL) |
| Lancashire County Council | Mr C Pountain |
| | CC P Buckley |
| | CC M Devaney |
| | CC Y Motala |
| | Mr F Williams |
| Co-opted Members | Mrs J Harris (Secondary Sector) |
| Observers | Dr M Craig (Baha'i) |
| Officers in Attendance | Mr J Hewitt |
| | Mr J Mynott |
| | Mrs K Dale |

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of Mr A Brennand, Mr N Anwar, Mr P Baker, Mrs K Cooper, CC K Ellard, Mr D Fann, Mr S Jogi, Mrs J O'Rourke, Mrs K Parekh and Mrs J Singh.

2. Minutes and matters arising

It was noted that under the minute of Any Other Business, the date of the diversity event hosted by the Hindu Society Lancaster and Morecambe to be held in Lancaster was 28 June and not 20 June as stated in the minutes.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Lancashire SACRE held on 4 March 2013, subject to the above amendment being made, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. SACRE membership

A report on membership was tabled at the meeting. It was noted that any discussion on membership should be based on the statutory requirements set out in the Education Act 1986 and the government 'non statutory' guidance of 2010 which identified the four representative groups as being:

- A. Christian and other religions and denominations which appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area
- B. The Church of England
- C. Associations Representing Teachers
- D. Representatives of the Local Authority

The size and membership of each group was determined locally and with each group having one vote. Lancashire SACRE also appointed a further group of non-voting co-opted members and a number of 'Observers.' Group D appointments are made by the County Council's Cabinet and all other appointments are made by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools. Any change to the membership would entail a change to the SACRE's constitution.

A number of criteria were suggested in the report for membership of Group A.

- 1. Major world religions – must be represented regardless of their local significance
- 2. Religions of local significance – which should reflect broadly the proportionate strength of the denomination or religion in the area – with census data as a starting point
- 3. A commitment to the aims and objectives of SACRE – demonstrated through previous engagement with the SACRE or with the teaching of RE and support for schools

Members noted that when assessing an application to join Group A, a place should be awarded to a religion or denomination and not to an individual

Changes to Group B, it was reported should only be considered if requested by the Church of England

Changes to Group C should only be considered if there was a change in the number of associations representing teachers in Lancashire

Changes to Group D the report stated should only be considered given any changes made to the numbers making up the other groups to ensure a continued approximate equivalency in numbers.

The five Co-opted non-voting members on the SACRE were appointed by the SACRE itself and were representatives from school and educational backgrounds. Changes could be made to the constitution to allow for more co-opted members but there would have to be a compelling reason for doing so.

Observers appointed by the SACRE have full speaking rights at committee but cannot participate in any vote and currently included one representative from Paganism and the Bahai faith. In September 2006, the SACRE had agreed to award a place as an Observer to the British Humanist Association but this was not currently being taken up. Prospective Observers were requested to make a presentation to the SACRE explaining about the belief or faith they represent and how they would support the aims of the SACRE.

Currently membership changes arose in two ways

1. Unsolicited applications:

- Religions or denominations might request to join Group A but would have to satisfy the criteria set out
- Any group might apply to join as an Observer and it was suggested that Observer status be offered first to enable the group concerned, even if a religious group applying to join Group A, to demonstrate a commitment to the SACRE and its aims

2. SACRE itself might identify a skills gap and seek to fill through recruitment. In this case the SACRE should seek to appoint a co-opted member

It was suggested that a third way of considering membership be introduced via a general review of membership every four years post county council elections, to consider all types of membership and allocation of seats.

In considering membership, it was suggested that a clear sight of the purpose, aims and objectives of SACRE be maintained to support schools and teachers in delivering excellent RE in line with the agreed syllabus in authority maintained schools.

Members considered an application from a representative of the British Humanist Association (BHA) to join the SACRE as a co-opted member and two applications to join Group A from the current Observer representatives of Paganism and the Bahai faith respectively.

After much discussion both for and against the three applications, members agreed to reconfirm the offer made to the British Humanist Association at the meeting of SACRE on 25 September 2006 to attend meetings in the capacity of Observer and then divided into the four groups to consider the remaining two applications with regard to the criteria set out in the report.

Members voted on the application from the Observer representative of Paganism to be granted membership of Group A as follows:

| | |
|---------|---------|
| Group A | Against |
| Group B | Against |
| Group C | For |
| Group D | For |

With the resultant tied vote, it was confirmed that precedent and protocol required that the status quo be maintained.

Members voted on the application from the Observer representative of the Bahai faith to be granted membership of Group A as follows:

| | |
|---------|---------|
| Group A | Against |
| Group B | Against |
| Group C | Against |
| Group D | Against |

Members wished it to be noted that the results of the vote were in no way a reflection of the excellent work done in support of the SACRE by the two Observer members.

RESOLVED: That:

- i. The principles set out in the report be agreed as the basis for any future consideration of changes to membership of the SACRE.
- ii. A member of the British Humanist Association should not be co-opted onto the SACRE but that the offer to attend meetings of the SACRE in the capacity of Observer be re-confirmed.
- iii. A representative of Paganism should not be granted membership of Group A
- iv. A representative of the Bahai faith should not be granted membership of Group A.

4. National Update

Helen Harrison, Lancashire Consultant for RE, presented a report on the national picture for RE, highlighting the following points:

- RE long report was still with Ofsted and was due to be launched possibly in July
- Broughton Business and Enterprise College was now recognised by Ofsted as a Good Practice school and had obtained gold level in the RE Quality Mark. Broughton and St Christopher's Academy were among 10 schools selected nationally to produce Young Ambassadors for RE and who were about to visit the House of Commons for the launch of the All Party Parliamentary Working Group.
- Both Helen and the Chairman of the SACRE, Peter Martin, had recently attended the NASACRE AGM in Birmingham where Alan Brine HMI and Dr Mark Chater, Director of Culham St Gabriels, had been the key-note speakers. Copies of their presentations Realising the Potential and Challenging SACREs respectively are available to view at the following address: <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/events>

RESOLVED: That the current national picture be noted.

5. SACRE Development Plan 2013 - 2015

Members were presented with a brief overview of priorities which had been identified following:

- A review of the current development plan
- Feedback from teachers and headteachers in Lancashire
- Discussion with Young People in Lancashire
- A review of national priorities and developments

Members were asked to consider a draft outline Development Plan and comment on the priorities by completing the questionnaire attached to the agenda and submitting it for consideration at the next meeting of the QSS.

The four priorities in the draft plan were listed as follows:

- Priority 1: To fulfil SACRE's statutory role by providing effective leadership of RE and Collective Worship
- Priority 2: To raise achievement in RE
- Priority 3: To improve the provision of Collective Worship
- Priority 4: To ensure that the provision of RE is informed by the views of stakeholders

Members commented briefly on the priorities at the meeting as follows:

- That parents and school governors should be added to the list of stakeholders in reference to Priority 4
- In order to raise standards, the Authority should share examples of Best Practice internally more effectively
- Effective communication with schools about the work of SACRE should be done via the Schools' Portal
- In relation to monitoring it was suggested that the SACRE could also monitor good practice to provide a more positive aspect to 'monitoring'
- With regard to the reporting of levels, it was reported that the notion of 'levels' was soon to disappear, possibly to be replaced by 'expected progress' but it was not yet known if this would relate to RE

RESOLVED: That the comments made by members on the draft Development Plan be considered by the Quality and Standards Sub-group at its next meeting on 17 July 2013.

6. Report of the Quality and Standards Sub-group

The Chairman commented that attendance at Quality and Standard Sub-group meetings had recently been very good and wished to thank all those who had attended.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the QSS sub-group which took place on 21 May 2013 be noted.

7. Lancashire Youth Voice

The Lancashire Consultant for RE, Helen Harrison, gave a power point presentation on the recent activities of the Lancashire Youth Voice (formerly the Youth SACRE).

The eighth annual youth conference had recently taken place and had been led by Youth Voice schools for Key Stage 3 students.

Recent Youth Voice work had included:

- Projects developed within schools ,for example, writing materials, working with parents, reviewing the value of RE
- Continuing to work with, learn from and inform local religious groups (this year Sikh, Salvation Army, Hindu) about the importance of RE
- Informing the wider community about RE: local MPs, the REC
- Working with the SACRE and SACRE members to ensure young peoples' voices are heard

Challenges for the Youth Voice included:

- attendance – two of the schools involved had become academies
- how to ensure students' work supported the work of the SACRE
- the Youth Voice section of the Lancashire SACRE web site needed developing.

It was essential to build on what had already been achieved by the Youth Voice and future work should be informed by the Lancashire SACRE development plan.

Youth Voice Schools had been given half a day to identify an area to develop and prepare a report for next term's meeting and it was suggested that Lancashire SACRE Youth voice apply for the NASACRE annual awards and work towards the 2014/15 conference.

RESOLVED: That the report on the Lancashire Youth Voice be noted.

8. Members' News

- Anita Tidswell reported that Reverend Stephen Poxon was soon to step down as Methodist District Chairman
- Francis Williams reported that former County Councillor Albert Thornton, also former Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the SACRE was gravely ill and in hospital.

9. Correspondence

It was reported that the Chairman had received a letter from Rosie Cooper MP which copied in a letter from Elizabeth Truss, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare, which provided general remarks about the curriculum.

10. Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Lancashire SACRE was noted as Monday 30 September 2013 to take place at 10am in Cabinet Room D at County Hall, Preston.

Roy Jones
Clerk to the SACRE

County Hall
Preston