

**OXFORDSHIRE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**Minutes of the Oxfordshire SACRE Meeting
At County Hall, Oxford, on Wednesday 4th March 2020 at 4.00 pm**

Present: Committee A: World Faiths, Christian Denominations
M = Member Steve Beegoo
SD = Standing Deputy Sarah Montagu
Sheikh Ramzy

Committee B: Church of England
Helen Norman
Carol Worthington

Committee C: Teacher representatives
Ruth Cohen

Committee D: Local Authority
Cllr Charles Mathew

Co-opted Members
Shahin Bekhradnia
Nigel Fancourt
Margaret Godden
Stephen Vickers (SD)

Visitors
Giles Beck (The King's School)
Sarah Payne (NATRE)
Paul Sparrey (Oxford Schools Chaplaincy)

In attendance: Helen Batten (Clerk)
Bill Moore (Advisor to SACRE)

Apologies: Lex George (Committee C)
Kim James (Local Authority)
Christine Price-Smith (Committee B)
Chandra Vadivale/Sathya Vadivale (Committee A)
Helina Taghavi (Co-opted)

Part 1: SACRE Meeting

1 Introduction

- CM welcomed everybody to the meeting and introductions were completed for visitors.
- Apologies tendered were accepted. CM noted concern at the number of members who were absent without apology.
- CM would need to leave the meeting early and part 2 would be chaired by NF.
- Catherine Hayward of OCC had notified she has changed role and will no longer be working with SACRE. Members were very appreciative of Catherine's assistance over the past two years, and agreed to thank her formally. **Action: CM to write to Catherine Hayward.**

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- Members also expressed good wishes to CPS who had been involved in an accident that day.
- CM asked members to raise the current issues of most concern to them. This produced a wide range of topics, all of which schools may need to cover in RE teaching.

2 Minutes of 12th November 2019 & matters arising

- Minutes which had been circulated were approved as an accurate record.
- Matters arising would all be covered by the current agenda.

3 NATRE Regional Ambassador

Sarah Payne introduced her current role which funded by NATRE until January 2021 to support RE teaching in the South Central region. Slides of the presentation had been circulated. Discussion raised the following questions:

- *Is it generally harder to make connections with primary schools, which often do not have a specialist RE teacher?* SP confirmed that this can be the case although primary schools tend to know that they need help. Secondary schools generally have a teacher with RE training but they can still find it difficult to ensure the right emphasis or recognise the need for external support. The aim of the groups is to engage teachers themselves to develop links and gain the support they want.
- *Are ambassadors working outside the maintained sector?* Currently most work is with maintained schools but we are keen to work with any schools that want to engage with us.
- *Is there genuine potential for schools to get better in the current circumstances?* NATRE does not consider that time currently allocated to RE is sufficient. Everyone involved needs to continue to pressure the government to make the right changes.
- *Will future funding of the ambassadors through trusts be secure?* Unfortunately the ambassador roles are only certain until January 2021. We are hopeful that other funders will be identified, so it is essential that the value of the work we are doing is evident to these bodies. A key priority is to establish local groups so that momentum will not be lost.
- *Will it be possible to obtain information about academies identified as in breach of funding agreements due to lack of RE provision, so that these concerns can be followed up?* The forthcoming NATRE meeting will be looking at this issue and we anticipate that further information will follow from that. NATRE is able to support SACREs in providing a model letter to schools in breach, and we will be using the renewed Ofsted focus on RE provision to raise the profile of some of this and provide supportive information to schools in preparation for inspection.

SACRE thanked SP for the vision and enthusiasm she is bringing to this work and asked her to communicate their thanks to NATRE for facilitating the ambassador roles.

4 Review of SACRE constitution

Following previous discussion the current 2010 constitution had been circulated. It was agreed to move forward with a full review in the next year, to include consideration of the following:

- Committee A membership should reflect the current population in Oxfordshire, particularly in the light of recent RE Commission recommendations.

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- Co-opted appointments need to be as comprehensive as possible so consideration will be given to including additional groups.
- The educational landscape has changed hugely in the past ten years with the introduction of academies and free schools, so it is no longer appropriate to specify that teacher representatives should be drawn from OCC teacher associations. The priority should be to make links with strong practitioners who will be able to assist the work of SACRE.
- Consideration will be given to including school governor representation within committee D.
- The system of standing deputies will be reviewed.
- Terms of office will be reviewed.

Actions:

- **NF will provide advice on legal requirements in drawing up a new constitution.**
- **BM will provide a draft constitution including suggested changes for further discussion at the November meeting.**

5 Annual report 2018-19

Preparation of the report is in hand, to be discussed at the June meeting.

Action: BM to circulate draft annual report.

6 SACRE strategic plan

- Following previous discussion the strategic plan had been circulated.
- Requested funding has been approved, the majority of which will cover time for the Advisor and Clerk. Members agreed this is a very encouraging development and thanked CM and BM for their work in achieving a pleasing outcome. It was also agreed to formally thank OCC for its funding decision. **Action: CM to write to thank OCC for agreeing improved financial support for SACRE.**
- BM and CM acknowledged the assistance of Catherine Hayward and Kim James in raising the profile of SACRE within the LA, and helping SACRE to work better with schools.

7 Local and national updates

- Details of the NASCRE national conference on 18th May had been circulated. SB, BM and CW will attend and report back to the June meeting. It was suggested that more information to help teachers prepare for Ofsted 'deep dives' will be well-received. Clarification is also required as to whether church schools that have undergone SIAMS inspection may also receive additional RE scrutiny from Ofsted. It was agreed that anything that will help schools to deliver good RE and thus be in a good position for inspection will be disseminated.
- SB noted that the recent NATRE survey shows that about half of non-religious academies are not delivering RE at KS4 although the increase in the number of RE teachers being trained is a positive development. Work with the All-Party Parliamentary group, as previously reported, is ongoing and a forthcoming meeting will provide another opportunity to bring concerns to the attention of MPs.

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- GB reported that his school is taking part in the research project into the development of argumentation in RE and Science. Feedback indicates the high quality of these aspects in RE, which is very encouraging.
- Following earlier discussion, members agreed that the current priority of SACRE must be to continue to engage teachers in ways that are useful to them, with the aim of setting up local networks by January 2021. BM confirmed that he will continue to liaise with NATRE and the Diocese to ensure that this work is not duplicated or fragmented. BM also observed that the pace of activities needs to increase, to effectively build on the 2019 teacher meetings, working initially with schools where RE is strong so that they can help to spread good practice and establish support networks. Teachers will also be involved in the new syllabus writing group and these activities should benefit each other. Individual members also confirmed they would be able to provide advice on teaching about their faith.

8 Next meeting

The next meeting will take place at County Hall on Tuesday 9th June 2020, at 4.00 pm.

The June meeting will confirm meeting dates for 2020-21.

The SACRE meeting closed at 5:20 pm, and was followed by the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Part 2: Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus Conference` - chaired by NF.

9 Rationale

BM confirmed that a sequenced and coherent curriculum will be produced, based on the notions of intent, implementation and impact. The structure of the syllabus will provide progression of knowledge and also understanding of what it means to have religious faith or non-religious beliefs today. However it cannot include everything so deciding what to leave out will be the main challenge.

Following discussion members agreed the recommendation to focus on both knowledge and skills since each will support the other, in the anticipation that children will use RE as part of their personal development so that they can reflect on what they themselves and others think and believe, and use this to gain deeper understanding of other areas.

10 Survey

BM explained that it will be important to find out what teachers think about curriculum aspects, and a key part of the network development will be to run teacher forums to facilitate the right discussions.

11 Teacher involvement

BM noted that teacher involvement did not happen as well as it could have in the development of the 2015 syllabus, and this was to the detriment of schools. The writing panel will therefore drive the development of the new syllabus, and will comprise approximately ten teachers covering all ages from five to eighteen. The writing group is currently being assembled and members were asked to contact BM with any further recommendations. GB and HN will participate in the writing group if possible.

12 Budget and plan

Members discussed the proposed programme of activities which had been circulated. It was agreed to concentrate activities on publication of the syllabus during March or April 2021, and then to spend some time developing appropriate support for teachers rather than trying to achieve both objectives simultaneously. Consideration will also be given to support materials, depending on available funding.

The meeting closed at 5:55 pm.