

Item No.2

At a meeting of the STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) held at the SANDHILL CENTRE on TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Mr C Short in the Chair

Church of England

Father C. Collins
Mrs. W. Lundgren
Mrs. L. Richardson
Christian and Other Denominations

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Mrs. S. Slater
Ms. K. Shipley
Mr. S. Singh
Mr. L. Dorjie

Teacher Associations

Miss A. McCherney
Mr. C. Short

Local Councillors

Councillor Francis
Councillor Gofton
Councillor Stewart

In Attendance:-

Margaret Ferrie - School Chief Inspector
Debra Dorward - Democratic Services Officer
Miranda Robinson - RE Support Advisory Teacher

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor P. Smith, Mr. J. Bhatt and Teresa Laybourne.

Minutes

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2008 be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment to reflect Lesley Richardson's apologies for absence.

Appointment of Vice Chairman

The Chairman nominated Teresa Laybourne as the Vice-Chairman for the academic year 2008/2009. This was duly seconded by Father Collins. It was therefore AGREED that Ms. Laybourne be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the academic year 2008/2009.

Acceptance of Carolyn Nicol, Usworth Colliery Primary School

SACRE Members approved the appointment of Carolyn Nicol from Usworth Colliery Primary School to the membership of SACRE as a Catholic diocese representative.

Debra Dorward was asked to formally record this fact and email Carolyn all future planned meeting dates.

At this juncture the Chairman felt it appropriate to introduce SACRE Members to Miranda Robinson, Vice Principal of Venerable Bede School. He advised that the Governing Body at Venerable Bede School had agreed to release Miranda for up to two days per week to provide support to SACRE.

Margaret Ferrie, Chief Inspector of Schools, stated that she was grateful to Miranda and Venerable Bede for their offers of support. What's more, she was delighted to welcome Miranda and looked forward to working with her.

Miranda thanked Margaret Ferrie and stated that she was pleased to be at the meeting and that in the past she had served on Bournemouth Borough Council's SACRE as a substitute representative for the Secondary Headteacher.

Revision of Locally Agreed Syllabus

The Chairman advised that the arrival of Miranda may allow for a review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus to be undertaken

He then identified three salient points regarding the review namely:-

- i) the timing of the review, and any changes;
- ii) Government Guidance on RE; and
- iii) the advice of the QCA at the end of the year.

The Chairman reported that Mark Chater had visited schools in the Local Authority to discuss RE with teachers, practitioners and pupils, and that the experience had been extremely positive. He was particularly delighted to see linkages with schools in Chicago and Japan.

Mark had attended a Conference on the 24th January, 2009 where he gave a talk entitled "Faith in the Curriculum". Malcolm Wallace, an officer responsible for governor training, was also in attendance at the Conference. He captured various points throughout the day, particularly some good quotes from children which he felt were highly rewarding.

Father Collins commented that he had thoroughly enjoyed the training, especially as Mark had showed a great amount of enthusiasm.

Thanks were expressed to Mark for all of his efforts.

Bursaries Update

The Chairman advised that nine bursary applications had been received, all of which were very good. Eight applications had been selected; £1,500 had been awarded to secondary schools and £4,653 to primary schools.

In addition, Usworth Colliery had identified a request for £653, which had also been awarded.

The Chairman added that he had written to each school notifying them of the approval of their bursary application, and requested any feedback on the way in which the money is spent to be forwarded onto him. Also, if in future, any of the schools were willing to invite SACRE Members to see what benefits had been achieved as a result of the grant, they would be greatly appreciated.

Remaining Budget

The Chairman advised that approximately £4,000 was remaining in the budget until 31st March, 2009.

Ms. Ferrie notified SACRE Members of two potential initiatives that could be considered for funding. The first was that she had been contacted by the Rector of Monkwearmouth who was proposing to develop materials relating to the Monkwearmouth site. Ms. Ferrie had suggested using the RE Think Tank to support the initiative. Included in this piece of work was how the St. Peter's

site could be utilised to support the bid for Heritage Status that Dr Ian Stockton was intent upon pursuing.

Ms. Ferrie also stated that an agreement was in place to establish a 'writing group' which it was proposed to trial in all schools to assist with the transition from primary to secondary school. It was considered vitally important that children possess a knowledge of their heritage and other multi-ethnic groups, and it was hoped that the writing group would provide an opportunity for this.

The Chairman supported the proposal to set up a 'writing group' and stated that in the past, St. Peter's had been opened for a week to visitors as a cultural attraction. This had proved very popular and was, on occasion, over subscribed.

In response to an enquiry regarding how the money would be spent on the initiative, Ms. Ferrie advised that the money would be used to fund teachers' time to test and trial materials and that a scoping paper on this issue would be brought to a future meeting of SACRE.

A further suggestion for utilising the remaining £4,000 in the budget was to fund the SACRED exhibition, containing a collection of Jewish, Christian and Islamic Holy texts - publicising inter-faith groups. This was being exported from London to Sunderland and was expected to be officially launched on 4 May, 2009.

SACRE Members AGREED to support the two initiatives discussed.

Further discussions ensued regarding the potential of undertaking trails in Sunderland on religion. A suggestion was raised to publish letter in the Sunderland Echo requesting people submit their personal stories on past heritage, which could then be used to contribute towards materials to share with others.

Any Other Business

Ms. Ferrie stated that it was her intention to establish a degree of support to schools on the subject of RE and SACRE. Monitoring and evaluation would be undertaken via the 'think Tank' and teachers had been identified. She went on to advise that an offer of small scale consultancy work would continue to be provided, and that her role in this field, together with Miranda Robinson's role, would be reported to the next meeting of SACRE.

To assist Ms. Robinson gain a knowledge and understanding of the Council, the Chairman suggested it might be useful for them to have an in depth discussion.

Ms. Ferrie agreed to arrange a meeting with herself, Ms. Robinson and the Chair as soon as possible.

Annual Report

The Chairman reported that Ms. Ferrie had furnished him with some ideas for inclusion in the Annual Report. However he asked that an analysis of examination results at KS4 should be done without the faith schools being included because SACRE had no statutory obligation to monitor such schools. Ms Ferrie agreed so to do.

He stated that Mark Chater had suggested that in future such Annual Reports would not have a deadline for publication to QCA. This, the Chair suggested, might mean that 2007/08 report did not have a time limit and should be published by 31 December, 2009.

Religious Education Results

Ms. Ferrie updated the Council on the performance of all pupils in relation to their GCSE exam results, all of which were very positive and higher than the national average.

In relation to the GCSE Short Course results, Ms. Ferrie, along with Ms. Robinson, intended to look further into these, as the statistics did not appear as positive. Ms. Ferrie stated that there could be a number of reasons for this, for example insufficient numbers of children may have been entered, courses not offered, poor choice of curriculum or poor teaching.

Nonetheless, the overall good performance of pupils GCSE results was a tribute to schools.

Future Meetings

It was AGREED that future meetings of the Council would continue to be held at the Sandhill Centre on a Tuesday at 5.30 p.m. Meeting diaries were as follows:-

16 June 2009

10 November 2009

9 February 2010

Having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance, the Chairman then closed the meeting.

(Signed) C. SHORT,
Chairman.

