

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held at the Sandhill Centre (Shackleton Room) on 14th
November, 2016 at 4.30 pm**

ITEM	Page
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Election of a Chairman	
3. Minutes of Previous meeting held on 26 th April 2016 (Copy attached).	1
4. Matters Arising	
5. Update from NASACRE	
6. Proposals for CPD – Primary and Secondary	
7. Local Authority links to inter-faith forums	
8. Right of withdrawal from Religious Education and Collective Worship Guidance (Copy attached)	5
9. Update on the implications for Religious Education of the Government White paper	
10. Date and Time of next meeting	

ELAINE WAUGH,
Head of Law and Governance.
Civic Centre,
SUNDERLAND.

28th October 2016

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

HELD ON TUESDAY, 26TH APRIL 2016 AT 4.30 PM

VENUE: SANDHILL CENTRE

Present: -

Local Councillors

Councillor Stewart – Chair

Councillor Leadbitter

Councillor Marshall

Councillor Williams

Teachers' Associations

Ms. A Hodgson

In Attendance

Cathryn Forbes, Specialist Officer

Paul Wood, Governance Services Officer

As the meeting was inquorate, the following discussions could not be viewed as having been approved and therefore, could not be acted upon until approved at a future quorate meeting.

SAC50 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor P. Smith, Annette Parr and Mrs W Lundgren.

SAC51 Nominations to join the SACRE Membership

Paul Wood advised that Mr Khan had tendered his resignation and a Mr Singh had declared his interest in joining the Membership. Mr Wood to forward the contact details onto Cathryn Forbes.

SAC52 Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 2nd February 2016

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2016 were a true record subject to the amendment that Mrs A. Hodgson had been in attendance.

SAC52 Matters Arising

Councillor Stewart noted that a meeting with a representative from the Salvation Army still needed to be arranged.

SAC53 SACRE Report

Cathryn Forbes referred to the Draft SACRE Report included in Members agenda packs for their consideration and enquired if there were any comments on the document.

In response to Councillor Williams enquiry as to why Durham was so successful with their SACRE membership, Mrs Forbes advised that it had taken a great deal of time for Durham to get into its current position and this had been down to a number of factors such as the low number of schools becoming academies and the range of people of different faiths but they also struggled with appointing Members from the Diocesan like other areas.

In relation to paragraph 7.2 of the report, the Councillor Stewart suggested that the provision of bursaries to support the development of RE in schools could be a way of promoting SACRE. Mrs Forbes advised that she could look at the possibility of implementing a project around interfaith week.

Members AGREED:

- The content of the report and for Cathryn Forbes to upload the document.

SAC54 Advisor Update

Cathryn Forbes circulated a draft letter which was to be sent to all Headteachers and Chair of Governors detailing information about Sunderland SACRE. Mrs Forbes advised that an amended finalised letter would be compiled from that which was included in the agenda papers and that an additional paragraph would also be included in relation to the Academies.

The amended paragraph would read as follows:

Academies may, but are not required to, follow the locally agreed RE syllabus. Alternatively, they can devise their own syllabus, but it must be in line with the legislation that underpins the locally Agreed syllabus. In April 2016 a document titled "Religious Education in your Academy: Improving Religious Education in academies and free schools" was sent to all academies and free schools for the attention of the Headteacher. We would strongly advise that you read this document as it clearly outlines your statutory duties and the work of SACRE.

With regards to the document sent to all Academies and Free Schools mentioned above, Mrs Forbes highlighted certain sections of relevance with a focus on examples of good practice for SACRE's, which included

- Working inclusively with local academies and school trusts in drawing up their syllabuses
- Warmly encouraging academies and free schools to use their local agreed syllabus
- Giving SACRE representation or consultative status to school confederations, multi- academy trusts etc.
- Providing RE teachers with training on a shared basis between academies and Local Authority schools.

In response to Councillor Williams enquiry if any links had been made with Grindon Hall Christian School, Mrs Forbes advised that they had not been made at present as they had attended the launch and the very first network meeting only, with usually the same four schools attending, the main difficulty was that the majority of schools in the area had a contract with Durham, therefore attended their Network.

Mrs Forbes informed of the NASACRE Conference and AGM 2016 due to take place on May 17th, 2016 in the Central Hall Westminster, London and if any Members wished to attend to inform Annette Parr. The Chairman requested that details of the invite be circulated via email to all Members of SACRE.

In relation to the SACRE Briefing 11 and the RE Quality Mark, Councillor Stewart suggested that £100 be given as a contribution to the first five schools to obtain the Quality Mark as a way of generating interest/participation.

Mrs Forbes informed Members of the intent to organise a Primary School day in September and that Annette Parr would be checking with the schools and a focus on Christianity/Islam with presentations, talks and activities to take place.

Members AGREED:

- to note the content of the letter to be circulated to Headteachers and Chair of Governors
- to note details of the NASACRE Conference and for any Members interested to contact Annette Parr

SAC55 Self Evaluation

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

SAC56 Any Other Business

There were no other items of business raised.

SAC57 Date and Time of Future Meeting

The date and time of the next meeting was to be confirmed once the Council diary for the next financial year had been agreed.

(Signed) Councillor P Stewart,
Chairman

Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education and Collective Worship Guidance

Introduction

This paper has been produced for use by the following SACREs: Durham, Hartlepool, South Tyneside, Sunderland. It gives some basic guidance for schools when dealing with requests from parents for withdrawal of their children from Religious Education and collective worship.

Rights of Parents and Responsibilities of Schools

All schools (including academies and free schools) must provide Religious Education (RE) and collective worship for all their pupils.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of RE and/or collective worship. When this happens, the school remains responsible for the supervision of the child and the health and safety of the child remains paramount. However, this should not incur extra cost to the school i.e. a child need not be supervised by a teacher or an assistant in a room on their own. It is usual for the child to be supervised in a library or study centre or with another class of pupils. SACRE does not recommend that children remain in the back of the RE classroom or assembly hall.

Parents do not need to give reasons for their request for the withdrawal of their child from RE and / or collective worship. Senior leaders may choose, however, to discuss their reasons with them. This helps avoid any misunderstanding there may be about the nature and purpose of RE and collective worship, including visits to faith communities and places of worship. (Note: RE and collective worship in schools are educational. RE must not be designed to convert pupils or to urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils).

Schools are not responsible for providing alternative provision, an alternative curriculum or extra work. The school should not incur any extra cost. For example, a parent cannot ask for extra English or Maths work to be given to their child. No extra marking should take place.

Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from other curriculum subjects (with the exception of sexual education) even when they cover aspects of religions and beliefs. Parents cannot determine the nature of content in these subjects. For example, pupils may encounter some religious ideas, beliefs or practices through Art, Music, Geography, English, History. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from the teaching of Religious Education not the reference to religions in other curriculum areas.

Further Considerations

- The right of withdrawal from RE and collective worship remains with the parent and not the child (apart from pupils in sixth forms who can decide for themselves). It would not be acceptable for a child of any age to tell the school that they do not want to be in RE lessons or that their parents have told them to tell the school. Parents must communicate directly with the school.
- It cannot be assumed that parents will exercise the right to withdraw their child from *both* RE and collective worship. For example, parents may choose to withdraw their child from collective worship but may wish for them to remain in RE lessons as part of their formal curriculum entitlement.
- Schools should not make assumptions that parents with particular beliefs will want to withdraw their child from RE and or collective worship. It is also not the case that every child in a family may be withdrawn from RE and / or collective worship. It is the right of the parents to approach the school not the responsibility of the school to approach the parents (including sets of parents from particular year groups or faith positions).
- Schools should be aware of issues surrounding religion, race and culture and ensure that parental right of withdrawal requests do not hamper their responsibilities to ensure equality for all and the active promotion of fundamental British values.
- SACRE recommends that school leaders request that parents discuss their right of withdrawal on an annual basis. This is not statutory but does enable regular discussions.
- Teachers (including headteachers although they remain responsible for provision) also have a right to withdraw from collective worship and teaching of RE although some teachers in church schools do not have this right. For further guidance please contact SACRE.
- Whilst SACRE members support the legal right of parents to withdraw their children from RE and collective worship they fundamentally believe that participation in both is beneficial to children both in terms of their achievement and personal development. Good RE enables children to develop religious literacy by learning about the concept of religion, finding out about the beliefs and practices of a range of religions and beliefs and developing skills of critical evaluation, as appropriate. RE promotes the attitudes of respect and tolerance and gives opportunities for children to reflect on their own ideas, experiences, values and beliefs. RE should not promote or encourage a certain set of beliefs. Collective worship should be educational and for all, giving opportunities for children to reflect on shared human experiences and values within the school community. As such it makes a key contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all children. SACRE recommends that schools discuss the purpose of RE and collective worship with parents and also ensure that all staff within the school clearly understand the nature and purpose of what RE and Collective worship is and is not.