

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
12 NOVEMBER 2013**

PRESENT:

Christian Denominations and Other Religions in the Area (Group A)

Mrs L Gaylard (Ground Level Network), Mrs C Dring (Baptist Church), Mr A Hornsby (Methodist Church), Mrs S Sreenivasan (Hindu Community) and Councillor C Burke (Roman Catholic) and Mr N McFarlane (Salvation Army)

The Church of England (Group B)

Mr D Clements, Mr D Scoffield and Mrs J Sheldrake

The Teachers' Panel (Group C)

Mrs C A Williamson (Secondary Schools)

Lincolnshire County Council (Group D)

Councillors C L Strange and Mrs E Sneath

Officers/Advisers

Wendy Harrison (RE Adviser), Sue Ashe (Religious Education – Head of Service for Leadership Development, CfBT Education Trust) and Judith Gilbert (Democratic Services Officer and Clerk to SACRE)

Observer

Luke Thompson, Lincoln University

PRAYERS

Prayers were said by Mrs C Dring.

The RE Adviser introduced and welcomed Judith Gilbert, Democratic Services Officer who had been appointed as Clerk to SACRE. Luke Thompson from Lincoln University was also welcomed to the meeting as an observer.

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On the nomination of Councillor C L Strange, seconded by Mr D Clements and there being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED

That Mr N McFarlane, (Salvation Army), be elected as Chair to SACRE for 2013/2014.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their confidence in his ability and indicated the post would be a great responsibility at a very difficult time due to, for example, many schools in Lincolnshire becoming Academies thus limiting the right of access to them in order to monitor and enhance Religious Education.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

On the nomination of Councillor C L Strange, seconded by Mr N McFarlane and there being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor C Burke, (Roman Catholic), be elected as Vice-Chairman to SACRE for 2013/2014.

3 NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A document was circulated to the meeting outlining the non-statutory National Framework for RE and it was reported that more information on the National Framework would be available at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F Sperring (Society of Friends), Professor B Winston (Lincolnshire Jewish Community), Councillor Mrs J Brockway and Mr M Plater, Bishop Grosseteste University.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 12 MARCH 2013

With regard to the meeting held on the 12 March 2013 regarding Lincoln Mosque, the Chair noted that the visit by the RE Adviser and Chair to Lincoln mosque had yet to be arranged.

Minute Number 38 regarding the formulation of a new action plan was discussed and it was proposed that group time be dedicated to the new action plan at the next meeting.

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Minute Number 39 regarding a RE Adviser role within the Diocese was discussed, and it was noted that a full-time appointment had been made with effect from 1 January 2014 to work part-time within the Diocese, and part-time as a schools' officer at the Cathedral. It was proposed that the new RE Adviser be invited to the next meeting of SACRE and to the 2014 Spring training day on the agreed Syllabus, if her time permitted.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 12 March 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/CORRESPONDENCE

There were no Chairman's announcements.

7 UPDATE ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ADVISER POST

Sue Ashe, CfBT Educational Services, reported that she had now taken over the role as the RE Adviser's Line Manager as well as Head of Service for Leadership Development with particular responsibility for recruitment training. It was felt that, in the majority of schools, RE is no longer given a high priority in the curriculum. This was due to a number of factors including the lack of subject specialists. However, as an example of good practice, it was noted that a visit had been made to a special school. The pupils showed much enthusiasm for the subject and it was reported that the visit had been well managed and areas for improvement had been identified from this visit. It was hoped that these visits would continue.

It was reported that the RE Adviser had made a huge difference in supporting RE in schools across the County and concern was expressed that this could only be continued with financial support from Lincolnshire County Council for the work undertaken by SACRE. The Council had hitherto agreed to continue to support this role, partly to help SACRE carry out its statutory functions and also to monitor provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It was confirmed that no information had been received by Councillors present at the meeting that it was Lincolnshire County Council's intention to withdraw funding and support for SACRE. The RE Adviser informed SACRE that her contract would expire at the end of March 2014 unless funding was available for it to be renewed.

It was therefore agreed that a document be prepared by the Chair and the RE Adviser outlining the work SACRE undertakes together with a resume of the key points identified in the recent 2013 Ofsted report and the All Party Parliamentary Group report. It was agreed that these documents be discussed, along with the importance of funding and support, with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. It was emphasised that Lincolnshire County Council had a statutory obligation with regard to RE being provided to Lincolnshire's schools as well as to SACRE.

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RESOLVED

That the verbal report be noted.

8 SUMMARY OF OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS
WITH REFERENCE TO PROVISION FOR PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL,
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The RE Adviser presented a summary of Ofsted Inspections of Lincolnshire Schools with reference to provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The report summarised inspectors' judgement on schools' provision for pupils' development which had been inspected by Ofsted since the last report was presented to SACRE on the 9 July 2013.

Whilst welcoming Ofsted's recommendations, members were frustrated that the main obstacle in their ability to fulfil statutory functions of monitoring RE in local schools still remained, for example, the absence of relevant information in Ofsted Inspectors' reports. Members were also disheartened that subject inspections no longer appeared to take place and that during Section 5 inspections there appeared to be an inconsistency in the way statutory requirements for RE and acts of worship were investigated.

SACRE asked in future for specific locations of the schools referred to in the Ofsted report and also pupil numbers for each school to be presented.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012

SACRE's Annual Report for 2011/2012 was presented to the Committee. It was reported that 2012/2013 was also near completion and would be available at the next SACRE meeting for members. Members were asked to submit any comments to the RE Adviser for the 2011/2012 Annual Report as soon as possible. It was confirmed that in the past Annual Reports were circulated to NASACRE and all schools in Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Report be noted.

10 NATIONAL UPDATES ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

It was agreed that this item encompasses Minute No 10, 11 and 12 as detailed below.

RESOLVED

That this be encompassed in Minute 10, 11 and 12.

11 THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP INQUIRY ON RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION (SUMMARY)

The RE Adviser circulated a report by The All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education entitled "The Truth Unmasked". The main findings of the included:

- In over half of the 300 primary schools which participated in the Inquiry, some or all pupils were taught RE by someone other than their class teacher. In a quarter of primary schools, RE was taught by teaching assistants
- Half of primary teachers and trainee teachers lacked confidence in teaching RE
- Over 50% of secondary school teachers of RE had no qualification or expertise on this subject
- Applications for secondary RE teacher training courses were currently 143 down on a similar time last year. It was felt that the loss of bursaries for RE were amongst one of the reasons for this.

The Inquiry's recommendations were discussed and emphasis was given to the fact that RE was now regularly taught by non-specialists. Teachers felt unsupported in this subject as they were often not allowed to attend centralised training. As a result, RE courses were often cancelled.

It was agreed after discussion a letter from the Chair of SACRE be sent to all Members of Parliament for Lincolnshire and the HMI with responsibility for RE. The letters should outline that whilst SACRE welcomed Ofsted's recommendations, SACRE members were very frustrated that one of the main obstacles preventing SACRE from fulfilling their statutory function of monitoring RE in schools remained, for example, lack of rigorous inspection of RE under the present framework. SACRE members were also disheartened that subject inspections no longer appeared to take place and that during inspections there appeared to be an inconsistency in the way statutory requirements for RE and acts of collective worship were investigated. They were encouraged by the Secretary of State's admission that RE had become a casualty of recent curriculum reforms. It was noted that the Secretary of State was interested in rectifying the situation brought about by the mistaken belief that the special status afforded to RE by law was sufficient protection. SACRE members acknowledged that neither his statement nor the All Party Parliamentary Group recommendations were of value unless they were actually actioned.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

12 OFSTED REPORT

The Chairman agreed that this matter had been discussed fully previously.

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A report was received outlining the RE Adviser's recent monitoring visits to six primary schools and three special schools in Lincolnshire. It was noted that where there appeared to be a good support for RE from the senior management of primary schools then the subject was given a high profile. The areas for improvement identified in primary schools were that it was evident, in one primary school in particular, that RE was neglected in the lead up to SATs. It was noted that some primary schools still needed to make additional effort to provide pupils with first-hand experience of faiths other than Christianity. It was also noted that one primary school had introduced the concept of "immersive learning" where pupils engaged in role play and classrooms were transformed into special places which related to a particular topic being taught. It was found that this was extremely effective in engaging with pupils and raising standards.

It was reported that RE was being taught in a very meaningful context in Special Schools with good links with the local community and good systems for assessment.

14 DIOCESE OF LINCOLN RE NEWSLETTER AND DIOCESAN EDUCATION UPDATE

An update was received from the Diocese of Lincoln which covered a whole range of issues which SACRE needed to be aware of. It was noted that the update was circulated to Church Schools in Lincolnshire.

A RE Education News update was also received from the Deputy Director of Education. It was noted that the children of Edenham Church of England Primary School last June visited Walsingham in Norfolk and talked about their beliefs.

RESOLVED

That the reports be noted.

15 NASACRE AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2013

The Autumn Newsletter for 2013 was received. Members were asked to read prior to the next meeting Pages 54 and 55 of the report as this matter would be fully discussed.

16 PROPOSED FUTURE MEETING DATES 2014

The following dates were agreed for SACRE meetings for 2014

Tuesday 1 April 2014 – Committee Room 1, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln – (prayers to be undertaken by Councillor Chris Burke, Roman Catholic Church)

Thursday 10 July 2014 – 2 pm

Tuesday 11 November 2014 – 2 pm

RESOLVED

That the dates be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm