

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
 24 NOVEMBER 2015**

PRESENT:

Christian Denominations and Other Religious Denominations (Group A)

Mr N McFarlane BEM (Chairman) (Salvation Army), Mrs C Dring (Baptist Church), Mrs L Gaylard (Ground Level Network of Churches in Lincolnshire), Mr A Hornsby (Methodist Church), Mr F Sperring (Society of Friends) and Mrs S Sreenivasan (Hindu Community)

The Church of England (Group B)

Mr D Clements, Mr D R Scoffield and Mrs J Sheldrake

Associations Representing Teachers (Group C)

Mrs E Moore (Primary Schools) and Mrs C A Williamson (Secondary Schools)

The Local Authority (Group D)

Councillors Mrs J Brockway, Mrs E J Sneath and C L Strange

Officer/Advisers

Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), Jill Chandar-Nair (Inclusion and Attendance Manager), Wendy Harrison (RE Adviser) and Gillian Georgiou (Diocesan RE Adviser and Lincoln Cathedral Schools Officer)

Also in attendance – Mark Plater (Bishop Grossteste University)

16 OPENING REFLECTIONS - MRS S SCREENIVASAN

Mrs S Screenivasan gave the opening reflections.

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Dr T Ahmed MBA (Islamic Association of Lincoln), Professor B Winston (Lincolnshire Jewish Community) and Ms S Thornton (Primary Schools)

18 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations made at this stage of the meeting.

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19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF SACRE HELD ON 23 JUNE 2015

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of SACRE held on 23 June 2015, be agreed as a correct record subject to the replacement of the words "the National Curriculum" by "subjects of academic significance", in minute 11.

20 UPDATES FROM THE MINUTES (IF ANY)

Mark Plater circulated a questionnaire titled "What is RE for?" and requested that members should complete and return it to him.

21 SACRE CONSTITUTION - UPDATE (MINUTE 14)

SACRE received a report on which provided details of its new constitution approved by Executive Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell on 29 September 2015.

Councillor Mrs E J Sneath noted that the local authority representatives (Group D) were required to be politically balanced which was not the case at the moment.

RESOLVED

That the new constitution for SACRE be noted.

22 CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE (IF ANY)

The Chairman stated that letters of support had been sent to those schools identified at the previous meeting of SACRE in connection with Ofsted inspections with particular reference to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

23 SUMMARY OF THE ACCORD INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS AWARD WITH RECOMMENDATIONS OF WHICH SCHOOLS TO NOMINATE

SACRE received a report in connection with the requirements for the Accord Inclusive Schools' Award. Wendy Harrison stated that the award was open to all schools in England and Wales and nominated schools would have to promote, amongst things, cohesion, inclusion, equality and the growth of mutual understanding as a core part of their ethos.

Wendy Harrison stated that since the nomination of Swineshead St Mary's Primary School, the head of that school was leaving the school at the end of the Autumn Term and therefore the school was unable to guarantee that work to achieve this award would continue.

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Members were disappointed that the school was unable to apply for the award and agreed that the opportunity should be taken to identify schools following inspection for nomination for the Award in 2016.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that schools be identified following visits by the Inspectorate to be nominated for the Award in 2016.

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

SACRE received a report which summarised inspectors' judgements on schools' provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) since the last report presented to SACRE on 23 June 2015.

Wendy Harrison noted that Ofsted were making more comments about British Values and in some cases, schools' responsibilities to address radicalisation and extremism.

Gillian Georgiou stated that Lincoln Christ's Hospital Academy and Nettleham Junior School had been awarded the RE Quality Mark for reaching Gold Level.

SACRE considered which schools should receive a letter of commendation from the Chairman. With regard to the comments made in connection with Cherry Willingham Community School it was agreed that a letter of support highlighting the positive aspects achieved in the teaching of RE, was required. One member explained that there had been serious concerns about the quality of the inspection but supported the sending of a letter of support.

RESOLVED

(a) That a letter of praise be sent to those schools detailed in the report which had received very positive comments for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

(b) That a letter of support be sent to Cherry Willingham Community School highlighting the positive things RE was undertaking in the school.

(c) That a letter of commendation be sent to Lincoln Christ's Hospital Academy and Nettleham Junior School for being awarded the RE Quality Mark for reaching Gold Level.

25 "A NEW SETTLEMENT: RELIGION AND BELIEFS IN SCHOOLS"

SACRE received a report summarising the paper launched by the Rt Hon Charles Clarke and Professor Linda Woodhead on 15 June 2015, as part of the Westminster Faith Debates. SACRE was informed that the National Association of SACRES (NASACRE) had asked local SACREs to discuss the recommendations, with a focus

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on collective worship and RE. SACRE was informed that while this was not a government paper it was possible that it could be considered by the government when forming its education policy.

Wendy Harrison stated that her presentation only addressed the main recommendations in the paper. Gillian Georgiou said that while Parliamentary briefings on RE had been issued before it was unusual that they should follow so soon after an independent report on RE and therefore showed that the Government might be listening.

Wendy Harrison tabled a questionnaire on the main recommendations detailed in the paper and members split into four groups to address each question.

Comments on each question were noted as follows:-

Question 1 – Should the current requirements for a daily act of collective worship be abolished? If so, what (if anything) should replace it?

Collective worship should not be abolished but it was accepted that change was required. There was a need for whatever replaced collective worship to be relevant to pupils and governors should be involved in deciding what was included in collective worship, or assemblies. The main difficulty arose because of the word "worship".

Other comments included:-

1. It appears that many schools were not meeting statutory requirements regarding collective worship.
2. There had been many changes in society since the 1944 Act and abolishing the statutory duty to have collective worship would let schools make their own decisions about what kind of assemblies or events should replace it.
3. Even if autonomy was given to schools the withdrawal of pupils might still be an issue.
4. If statutory requirements were abolished, some schools might not have any kind of assemblies.
5. The ethos of the school depended on the head teacher and staff, not just governors.

Question 2 – Should locally agreed RE syllabuses be replaced by a national curriculum for RE? If it was, what might the advantages and disadvantages be?

The move towards the provision of a nationally agreed syllabus might make more sense now that so many syllabuses resemble each other. At the time of the 1944 Act there was less diversity in the country. Areas like Lincolnshire were now more diverse than in the past and RE had to include teaching about a range of religions, beliefs and cultures. A national curriculum for RE would address the problems pupils faced at present when moving from one local authority area to another. However, the introduction of a non-statutory local element into the national syllabus would be useful.

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Other comments included:-

1. The QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, no longer in existence) was advisory only but many schools thought that the programmes of study for RE they produced was actually statutory guidance.
2. The identification of experts to work on the national curriculum for RE would be difficult as so many viewpoints would have to be taken into account.

Question 3 – How might the role of SACREs be transformed if a national curriculum for RE was put in place?

There would still be a role for SACRE but in a different format. Questions were raised about how a national body could support local SACREs. Local SACREs had the opportunity to reflect on local issues. The work undertaken by local authority RE Advisers was important – how would this change if there was a national curriculum for RE? It might be possible for some local SACREs to secure funding over and above that provided nationally. One member commented that grants had been applied for in the past and this was an area which should be examined.

Question 4 – Should the right of withdrawal (from RE and acts of collective worship) be abolished?

Overall, the feeling was that the right of withdrawal should be abolished. Why was there a need to withdraw a pupil in the first place if there was nothing offensive or threatening being taught? There had been many changes in society since the 1944 Act and RE and collective worship was far more inclusive and tolerant. If RE was truly educational (not instructional, as previously) there should not be a need for withdrawal.

Other comments included:-

1. Young people were a lot more tolerant today.
2. There was a need to educate parents –often they withdrew their children due to a misunderstanding about the purpose of RE, e.g. from visits to places of worship.
3. There might be a need for RE and collective worship to be rebranded.
4. Parents should be informed of a school's expectations, e.g. academic and pastoral.
5. There was a need to continue to keep RE separate from collective worship.
6. The idea of change for just a small number of pupils was unnecessary.
7. It might be the case that most schools were not following collective worship as defined in the 1944 Act and Circular 1/94 but there was a lack of hard evidence for this.

RESOLVED

That the comments of SACRE be forwarded to NASACRE by Wendy Harrison.

26 AGREED SYLLABUS - UPDATE

Wendy Harrison gave a verbal update in connection with the latest situation on the Agreed Syllabus. She outlined the timeframe for reviewing the syllabus and reminded members that the next syllabus had to be in schools by 2017.

She stated that a consultation questionnaire in connection with the Agreed Syllabus had been sent to all schools but responses had been slow in coming back. There was a legal requirement to set up an Agreed Syllabus Conference which could comprise either all members or a working group of members of SACRE. Members were in favour of a working group being set up.

RESOLVED

(a) That the Agreed Syllabus be placed on future agendas for consideration at each meeting.

(b) That a small working group of members be appointed to examine this matter and that SACRE members be asked to forward their name if they are interested in serving on the working group.

27 SACRE ACTION PLAN

Jill Chandar-Nair and Wendy Harrison presented an update on the Action Plan. There was a need to review the Action Plan, e.g. to decide what SACRE members should be doing and how they could be more proactive, to clarify Wendy Harrison's role and to decide what it wished to fund during the next twelve months assuming funding was available.

Wendy Harrison suggested that some funding might be used to support a training event for teachers similar to one provided in Leicester. This involved members of faith communities talking to teachers about their beliefs and also included visits to places of worship. The training event had been organised by the St Phillip's Centre in Leicester. The director, Riaz Ravat, had previously been involved with training events in Lincolnshire and it was decided to invite him to the next meeting of SACRE.

Wendy Harrison explained that a film had been made in Leicester about British Values. This included clips of pupils speaking about values and what they considered to be important. The film also showed members of Leicester's SACRE giving their views about British Values. Wendy Harrison stated that the film's producers were interested making a similar film in Lincolnshire. It would be interesting because of Lincolnshire's different demographic make-up.

Jill Chandar-Nair stated that the film had raised the profile of Leicestershire's SACRE and the importance of SACREs.

The Chairman stated that any action needed specific targets in terms of SACRE's involvement and supported the suggested training event.

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Wendy Harrison suggested that as well as inviting Riaz Ravat to the next meeting, the Chairman could also invite members of Leicester's SACRE.

RESOLVED

(a) That the format of the Action Plan be reviewed.

(b) That a representative from the St Phillip's Centre and members of Leicester's SACRE be invited to attend Lincolnshire's SACRE's next meeting.

(c) That the film about British Values made in Leicestershire be showed at the next meeting.

28 SACRE/RE CONFERENCE

Wendy Harrison stated that the SACRE/RE Conference did not take place as planned due to a number of issues, including funding. NOTED.

29 THE WESTHILL/NASACRE AWARDS 2015/16 - OUTCOME

Wendy Harrison reported that the submission of Lincolnshire's bid for an award of up to £4,000 to help young people to develop their skills of listening to each other without prejudice had not been successful. She stated that it might be possible to submit another bid during 2015/16.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and bids for 2015/16 would be submitted when appropriate.

30 DIOCESAN MATTERS - UPDATE

SACRE received an update report on Diocesan matters. Gillian Georgiou stated that £50,000 had been awarded for a RE project to engage parents in RE and work was currently on-going with a film company and a drama group to work on this project. A key element of the project was the availability of multi-media resources.

Gillian Georgiou stated that inter-faith work would be ready next year.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

31 SUGGESTED FUTURE DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS OF SACRE -
SPRING TERM - 8 MARCH 2016 AND SUMMER TERM - 7 JULY 2016
(AT 2.00PM)

The following dates and times of future meetings of SACRE were agreed:-

8 March 2016 and 7 July 2016 at 2.00pm.

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It was agreed that a meeting date for SACRE in the Autumn Term 2016 would be agreed at the next meeting.

David Schoffield agreed to do reflections for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm