

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
 21 FEBRUARY 2017**

PRESENT:

Christian Denominations and Other Religious Denominations (Committee A)

Neville McFarlane BEM (Chairman) (Salvation Army), Chris Burke (Roman Catholic Church), Christina Dring (Baptist Church), Lynette Gaylard (Ground Level Network of Churches in Lincolnshire), Andrew Hornsby (Methodist Church), Swathi Sreenivasan (Hindu Community), Dr Tanweer Ahmed MBA (Islamic Association of Lincoln) and Chris Rose (Society of Friends)

The Church of England (Committee B)

David Clements, Cherry Edwards OBE and David Scoffield

Associations Representing Teachers (Committee C)

Catherine Williamson (NASUWT)

The Local Authority (Committee D)

Councillor Mrs Jacqueline Brockway and Councillor Charles Lewis Strange

Officer/Advisers

Steve Blagg (Democratic Services Officer), Wendy Harrison (RE Adviser) and Gillian Georgiou (Diocesan RE Adviser)

34 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elizabeth Sneath (Committee D) and Sarah Thornton (Committee C).

35 OPENING REFLECTIONS BY CHRIS BURKE

Chris Burke gave the opening reflections.

36 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were made at this stage of the meeting.

37 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF SACRE HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2016

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The Chairman stated that as the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 22 November 2016 had been inquorate it would be necessary for this meeting to approve the decisions made by that meeting.

RESOLVED

(a) That the decisions made at the previous meeting of the SACRE be approved.

(b) That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 November 2016, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The SACRE was informed that the Lincolnshire Jewish community had yet to respond to a request to nominate a representative from that community to represent them on the SACRE. It was also noted that no response had been received from the United Reformed Church and a response was awaited from the Church of England in connection with the appointment of Mark Plater to Committee B on the SACRE.

(Note: Mark Plater, Bishop Grosseteste University, at this stage of the meeting, tabled the results of "What is RE For? He added that the responses given by RE teachers were similar to the responses given by SACREs and added that the responses of SACREs were detailed in the British Journal for Religious Education (BJRE) publication).

38 SUMMARY OF OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS
WITH REFERENCE TO THE PROVISION FOR PUPIL'S SPIRITUAL,
MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (SMSC)

The SACRE received a report which summarised inspector's judgements on schools' provision for pupils' SMSC development in those schools inspected by OFSTED since the last report presented to the SACRE on 22 November 2016.

Wendy Harrison stated that she had written to those schools which in the opinion of the SACRE required more support but none of the schools had responded to her request. One member suggested that the reason for a lack of response might be because many of these schools did not regard this as a priority due to other commitments and that it was possible that the schools might be receiving support from elsewhere. It was noted that most letters sent to schools were complimentary and it was agreed that Wendy Harrison should continue to send letters to the schools agreed by the SACRE.

Wendy Harrison drew the SACRE's attention to explanation of the "Overall Effectiveness" grade and "Short Inspections" headings in the report adding that the SMSC grade had no connection to the effectiveness of the teaching of RE.

Comments by the SACRE included the important role played by local Churches in supporting the teaching of RE particularly in rural areas and that some schools were unaware of other multi-cultural/faith communities nationwide and that the work carried out in schools to increase awareness in this area was important.

RESOLVED

(a) That the report be noted.

(b) That letters of commendation be sent by the Chairman to the following schools:-

Kirkby-la-Thorpe CE Primary School, Sleaford
Belmont Community Primary School, Grantham
The Lincoln St Peter at Gowts CE Primary School, Lincoln
The Beacon Primary Academy, Skegness
Hawthorn Tree School, Boston
William Hildyard CE Primary and Nursery School, Market Deeping

39 SACRE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The SACRE received a verbal update on the progress of the Action Plan whose purpose was to identify areas of work for the SACRE advisor and members of the SACRE.

Wendy Harrison stated that there had been little progress to date due to the absence of some members of the working group preparing the Plan being unable to attend meetings. A report would be submitted to the next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

40 NEW AGREED SYLLABUS: DRAFT COPY OF PROPOSED
STRUCTURE/CONTENT

The SACRE received a report in connection with the new Agreed Syllabus (AS) which gave details of its proposed structure and content.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that SACRE had agreed to establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to produce an Agreed Syllabus and it was that group that would make any key decisions. At the previous meeting some concern had been expressed about aspects of the proposed structure of the new Agreed Syllabus, particularly regarding Judaism and its non-inclusion in the "compulsory elements" section. Wendy Harrison had written to all members to ask them to let her know of their specific concerns following that meeting and had only received one response though one member had informed the Clerk to the SACRE that she preferred to express her views during the meeting.

Wendy Harrison stated that it was unfortunate that both she and Gillian Georgiou had been unable to attend the previous meeting to address the concerns raised by members. She was now able to explain the rationale behind the decision of the ASC on the compulsory elements of the Agreed Syllabus. She clarified the separate roles of the ASC, SACRE and the local authority in terms of decision making. The

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teacher's working party had a key role to play in preparing the draft documents. She stated that it was necessary to review the current AS because there was a statutory duty to do so, it was not fit for purpose, there had been significant changes in society reflected in the 2011 Census, there had been an increase in the amount of RE teaching by non-subject specialists, and it was considered that the current AS was no longer supporting teachers in the way that it should.

Wendy Harrison stated that there was no change to the statutory requirement to ensure that Christianity remained compulsory throughout the RE curriculum. The new AS would also include compulsory elements of Islam and Hinduism. Alongside these there were to be "additional" units which would allow schools to teach other faiths such as Judaism or themes, such as a local study.

Gillian Georgiou stated that the additional elements were not optional, though there would be opportunities for schools to develop them as they thought appropriate. She emphasised that schools would be able to decide about what was relevant to their area. She gave an example of the use of the theme of "light" which had significance in many of the main religions.

Comments made by the SACRE and responses of officers included:-

- There was some potential for confusion, particularly for very young children and Christianity should only be emphasised at this early stage. However, the present syllabus stated that religions other than Christianity should be taught at all key stages. Officers stated that RE teaching should be appropriate to the age of the pupil and would allow schools to focus on more of an in-depth study of religion which they consider appropriate.
- There was nothing to prevent a school including aspects of Judaism in the teaching of other faiths and beliefs. The distinction was made between using Old Testament texts to support the teaching of Christianity and teaching about Judaism as a religion on its own right.
- There was a need for teachers to have an understanding of RE. In an earlier report Ofsted identified Christianity as the religion that was taught very badly.
- The largest faiths in Lincolnshire were Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.
- The cultural heritage of the UK was Christian and therefore there was a legal obligation that Christianity was a compulsory element of the AS. In this respect the law and the AS had not changed.
- Comparisons between different religions were already taught in schools.
- Officers stated that the additional elements still required examination. This would be something for the teachers' working party to attend to.
- 25% of schools in Lincolnshire were Church schools. Officers stated that CofE Voluntary Controlled schools had a legal obligation to follow the local AS.
- Judaism was fundamental to understanding Christian issues and was important to understanding Jewish issues today. This was different from teaching about Judaism in its own right.

The Chairman thanked members for their comments which would be considered by the ASC.

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RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that the comments of the SACRE be referred to the ASC.

41 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN YORK ON 16 MAY 2017

The Chairman stated that the SACRE had been invited to attend the annual NASCRE conference in York on 16 May 2017. Andrew Hornsby expressed an interest in attending the conference and would confirm his attendance with the Clerk.

42 OPENING REFLECTIONS AT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE SACRE ON 25 APRIL 2017

Dr Tanweer Ahmed MBA agreed to do the reflections at the next meeting.

43 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING - 25 APRIL 2017 AT 2.00PM AT THE COUNTY OFFICERS, LINCOLN

The date and time of the next meeting was arranged for 2.00pm on Tuesday 25 April 2017, at the County Offices, Lincoln.

(Post Meeting Note

Please note the meeting on 25 April 2017 has been cancelled and the next meeting will now be Tuesday 11 July 2017 at 2pm at the County Offices, Lincoln)

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm