

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
10 JULY 2007
(5.00 - 6.25 pm)

Present:-

Free Churches:

Revd Michael Bentley
Mrs Paula Ridgeway
Mrs Irene Robinson

Roman Catholic Churches:

Mrs Louise Birley

Other Religions:

Dr Kathy Hadfield
Mr Kusim Trikha

Church of England:

Mr Gordon Anderson (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Maureen Beadsley
Mrs Julie Graham

Bracknell Forest LEA:

Councillor Andy Blatchford
Councillor Trevor Kensall
Councillor Clifton Thompson

Observers:

Mr Arfan Rashid
Mr Michael Levin (Minutes 15-18)

In attendance:

Mr Martin Surrell, Senior Advisor, Bracknell Forest Borough Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor S Burrows, Mrs A Gibbons, Councillor Mrs D Hayes, Mrs S Hunt,
Mr C Hickson, Mrs K Nugent and Mrs J Mintern.

15. Welcome and introductions [prayer to be led by Felicity Allen]

The Chairman, Gordon Anderson, welcomed all those present to the meeting including Mr Arfan Rashid who was attending as an observer.

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2007

The minutes of the SACRE Meeting held on 7 March 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. Matters arising

Minute 3 – Matters Arising – proposal to purchase books.

The meeting was advised that the books and DVDs on Christmas and Christianity and the book and CD entitled “Science and Religion in Schools” had been purchased and were available for loans upon request.

Minute 10 – Wokingham SACRE Induction Training

The SACRE was advised that this training had been far more comprehensive than originally anticipated and the Chairman had materials from it which could be shared by SACRE at a later date.

Minute 13 – Annual SACRE AGM

The meeting was advised that David Fawcett had not attended as he had not been re-elected to retain his LEA place on SACRE. There had therefore not been any attendance from the Bracknell Forest SACRE at this AGM.

18. **SACRE membership**

The meeting was advised that Julie Graham was retiring as both Head of Ascot Heath School and a Church of England representative on SACRE. The Chairman on behalf of everyone present expressed his thanks for Julie's contribution to the work of SACRE and best wishes for the future. The diocese had been approached with regards to a replacement for Julie and agreements reached that David Fawcett would be a good person to nominate for this role. It was agreed that the Chairman may seek written confirmation of this nomination. **(ACTION: Gordon Anderson)**

With regard to the two Co-optee positions, the meeting was advised that there had been a query around the continued SACRE membership of Michael Levin which would be considered further. Gill Ledsham had been experiencing ill health and not attended recent meetings. Arfan Rashid was attending as a potential Co-optee, however the position with regard to the existing Co-optees required clarification as the SACRE constitution currently only allowed for two Co-optees. The possibility of increasing this to three would also be investigated.

(ACTION: Gordon Anderson / Tina Stevenson)

19. **SACRE's budgets: 2006/07 outcome and 2007/08**

2006-07

This budget had been fully spent, as the modest remaining funds had been allocated to the future purchase of artefacts.

2007-08

The allocation was unchanged from the previous year at £3,370. To date funds had been spent on attendance at the Wokingham Induction session (£55) and Berkshire SACREs Conference (amount yet to be established). Also, £85 had been spent on a re-subscription to RE Today. A request for a further subscription was felt to be unnecessary at present, to be reviewed at a later date if required.

20. **Examination statistics for 2005/06**

The meeting considered a tabled paper which provided examination statistics for Religious Studies in Bracknell Forest LEA schools for 2005/06. Overall, just over 1,000 students had attended a Religious Studies course with approximately 75% of these completing the exam. The pass rates at GCSE were very good with 278 of the 287 entrants achieving grades A-G for the full course and 437 of the 458 short course entrants achieving grades A-G. At A Level, 27 of the 35 candidates achieved grade

A-C. The meeting agreed that those results reflected the high quality of RE being taught in Bracknell Forest Schools.

21. **New Agreed Syllabus**

a) Humanism Appendix

The meeting discussed the current situation with regard to the possible Humanism appendix as it did not seem to be progressing at present. It was agreed that this matter be left to be pursued by Jo Fageant with the relevant parties and any progress reported back to a future SACRE meeting.

b) Feedback from Schools

The meeting was advised that the feedback from schools, essentially via the RE Co-ordinator meetings was that the new syllabus was helpful and had encouraged more networking and joint approaches to revising curriculums and scheme of work. It was observed that this feedback was from a primary school perspective and establishing how the secondary schools viewed the curriculum was work yet to be done.

(ACTION: Martin Surrell / Samantha Hunt)

The Chairman advised that he had recently met with Tony Eccleston (Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries) and Alison Fletcher (Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries) to discuss the issues around SACRE access to the information from schools necessary to fulfil its statutory role.

It had been agreed that SACRE continue to use the information and support provided by Senior Advisors in the Education department with ideas for the future to be considered as part of the work involved with regard to the SACRE development plan for 2008.

The Chairman also advised the meeting that there was a possibility of the Borough obtaining professional RE advisory services for the schools, although negotiations were at an early stage.

22. **Ofsted Report: 'Making Sense of Religion'**

The Chairman advised the meeting of the OFSTED Report: Making Sense of Religion, which was very interesting and relevant to the work of the SACRE. The report was available via the website (reference 070045, published June 2007) and provided a key Church of England perspective in relation to the teaching of religious studies in schools.

23. **Resources Centre and Artefacts update**

a) Staffing

The meeting was advised that due to staff changes, three staff were now responsible for covering the artefact lending scheme which was available from 4-6pm each day. All staff had been trained to handle the artefacts correctly. The SACRE felt that the introduction of a procedure when receiving returned artefacts to document their condition and ensure they were kept in good condition and replaced as necessary was very important.

(ACTION: Martin Surrell / Samantha Hunt)

b) Artefacts Usage

A report was tabled which detailed the artefacts loaned to schools from September 2006. The number of loans made was low and the meeting considered possible reasons for this and ways to make better use of the artefacts. Issues highlighted included:

- Many secondary and some primary schools have their own collections of artefacts;
- RE Co-ordinators meetings could be used to highlight the availability and wide range of the artefacts available;
- Investigations be made into the possibility of taking an artefacts display around the schools, although keeping them safe had to be of paramount importance; and
- The need to update the list of places of worship and other useful contacts prepared for the Agreed Syllabus so that there was a central list of people available to talk knowledgeably about the artefacts, as necessary.

c) Internet access

The meeting was assured that the artefacts catalogue was now available on both the BFBC internet and intranet sites.

24. **Berkshire SACREs' Conference – Thursday 28 June 2007**

The Chairman reported that the Conference had been enjoyable and worthwhile and again had provided materials which would be useful to share with the SACRE at a future date.

Mark Charter of the QCA had been a good key speaker and he had acknowledged the difficulties experienced by SACREs under the OFSTED system of inspection, which were struggling to access the information needed to fulfil their statutory obligations.

25. **Raising the profile of SACRE**

The meeting agreed that volunteers would be needed to attend the new teaching staff induction sessions on 19 September. Louise Birley and Paula Ridgway volunteered immediately. Full details would be sent to SACRE Members who emailed Martin Surrell (martin.surrell@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) to volunteer.

(ACTION: All / Martin Surrell)

26. **Any other business**

The issue was raised of the possible purchase of general DVDs about Religious Studies for students to use for their study and research as schools often had insufficient funds to purchase such items. Concerns were expressed that that this was because they were expensive, that it was not the role of SACRE to provide materials for individual schools except in exceptional circumstances, there could be copyright issues and that maybe they could be available via the library service. It was agreed that further investigation and consideration be given to the issues highlighted before making any decision. **(ACTION: Martin Surrell / Samantha Hunt)**

Rotation of the days on which future meetings are held was requested and agreed to, once the dates currently set had run out.

27. **Dates of future meetings:**

Tuesday 13 November 2007
Tuesday 4 March 2008
Tuesday 10 July 2008

Felicity Allen led a prayer to close the meeting.

CHAIRMAN