

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
13 NOVEMBER 2007
(5.00 - 6.45 pm)

Present:

The Free Churches:
Revd M. Bentley
Mrs I. Robinson

Roman Catholic Churches:
Mrs A. Gibbons

Other Religions:
Dr K. Hadfield (Bahai Faith)
Mrs K. Trikha (Hindu Faith)

The Church of England:
Mr G. Anderson (Chairman)
Mrs M. Beadsley
Mrs J. Mintern

Associations representing teachers:
Mrs K. Nugent
Mr C. Hickson
Mrs F. Allen

Bracknell Forest Borough Council:
Councillor Burrows
Councillor D. Hayes
Councillor Kensall
Councillor Thompson

Observers:
Mr A. Rashid

In attendance:

Mrs J. Fageant, SACRE's Associate Adviser
Mr T. Eccleston, Director of Education, Children's Services & Libraries (BFBC)
Mr M. Surrell, Senior Adviser, Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Mrs P. Patel, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Blatchford, Ridgway, Louise Birley and Hunt

28. Welcome [prayer to be led by Cllr Thompson]

The Chairman, Gordon Anderson, welcomed all those present to the meeting.

29. Election of Chairman (clerk in the Chair)

On the proposition of Mrs Beadsley, seconded by Mrs Hayes it was

RESOLVED that

Gordon Anderson be appointed as the Chairman of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the academic year 2007-08.

30. Election of Vice-Chairman

On the proposition of Gordon Anderson, seconded by Michael Bentley it was

RESOLVED that

Louise Birley be appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the academic year 2007-08.

31. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 July 2007 (attached)**

The Chairman asked that the clerk add Councillor Thompson as an attendee. With this addition, the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 10 July 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(Action: Priya Patel)

32. **SACRE Membership (verbal)**

The Chairman reported that a proposed updated constitution and membership for SACRE would be presented in the next item on the agenda. The original intention had been that Mr Arfan Rashid would fill the vacant co-opted position, however with constitutional changes being proposed, it was likely that Mr Rashid could become a nominated member of SACRE.

33. **SACRE constitution - proposed amendment (attached)**

The Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries presented a report that sought the agreement of members to a revised constitution and membership for the SACRE. The purpose of the change was to bring the membership of the SACRE into line with the range of faiths represented in the Agreed Syllabus. It was therefore proposed to increase the number of representatives in Group A to include one member for each of the faiths covered in the Agreed Syllabus. This would increase the size of the group by three members. The Bahai faith which had been represented in this group, but was not one of the main religions in the Agreed Syllabus could still be represented through co-opted membership if SACRE agreed this. It was not intended that a co-opted place would be reserved for a representative of the Bahai faith in perpetuity.

Members expressed concern that the Bahai representative had been very active and as a co-opted member she would lose her vote. The Chairman stated that it was very rare for SACRE formally to use its voting rights, as a result he hoped that this would not limit co-opted members from participating fully.

It was noted that on page 10 of the agenda, NUT was listed twice, one of these references needed to be amended to NAHT.

Members expressed that they were happy with the changes proposed to the SACRE's Constitution. The Chairman asked that once it had been approved by the Executive Member that the clerk write to relevant bodies to seek nominations for the 'other religions' category, and then endeavour to make the relevant appointments in consultation with the Chairman.

It was agreed that the revised composition of SACRE attached at Appendix A of the report, be recommended to the Executive Member for Education and Libraries for adoption.

(Action: Priya Patel)

34. **Resources Centre and Artefacts report (verbal)**

Martin Surrell, Education Officer (Bracknell Forest) reported that £539 had been spent on artefacts by SACRE. The artefacts were mainly Hindu and Sikh artefacts as these had the greatest demand. He thanked Samantha Hunt for her efforts in acquiring the artefacts. He confirmed that the artefacts were being stored and exhibited at the Education Centre at Easthampstead Park Mansion.

Members noted that at their last meeting there had been concerns about the loaning system for artefacts and how it was working. Martin Surrell, stated that the Resources Centre Manager at the Education Centre had left. Two members of staff were now in post, who were responsible for the management of the artefacts as well as having other responsibilities at the Education Centre. These staff ensured that a log was kept of artefacts being loaned and returned. They also recorded the condition of artefacts when they were returned. One member asked if a log could be kept as to which year group was using the artefacts, as well as writing a short feedback summary on how the artefacts were being used by the school. Martin Surrell agreed to speak to the staff at the Education Centre about this and to arrange for it to be raised at a meeting of RE co-ordinators.

One Member reported that the artefacts had been well observed and looked at, during the recent 'Welcome to Bracknell Forest' for new teachers meeting. She felt that the artefacts presented a wonderful opportunity to raise the profile of SACRE.

It was noted that the artefacts were covered by the general insurance held by Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

The Chairman asked that Martin Surrell write to all schools to provide the contact details of the two members of staff that now managed the artefacts.

(Action: Martin Surrell)

35. Raising the Profile of SACRE (verbal)

The Chairman expressed that he was delighted that as a SACRE, Bracknell Forest had good, highly qualified representatives. He stated that the session for new teachers had been very successful in that Members of SACRE had enjoyed speaking to numerous new teachers and had encouraged them to stop and look at the artefacts on display. In particular, the teachers had been very impressed with the Buddhism cabinet and the Christian artefacts on display. The Chairman stated that he was keen that all local schools understood what SACRE did and of the resources that were available.

36. Provision of RE Teaching Materials (verbal)

The Chairman reported that a query had been made by a local school, as to whether SACRE could fund materials for an individual school. The meeting agreed that SACRE's budget was not intended to fund individual schools' needs and felt that generally, it was more effective to fund a central pool of resources that could be utilised by all schools. However, it was noted that SACRE would be happy to consider any requests received by it. It may be that a school made a request that involved acquiring resources that could be loaned to other schools within the Borough.

37. Update on Curriculum Matters (verbal)

SACRE's Associate Adviser, Jo Fageant informed members that the revised QCA (Qualifications & Curriculum Authority) Schemes of Work had now been published on the QCA website under the Subjects section. There was one unit of work per year

group and the themes were exactly the same as those set out in the Bracknell Forest Council Agreed Syllabus. However the allocation of religions did not match those of Bracknell Forest Council.

She stated that it was a very detailed and useful resource. Some areas were more useful than others, for example, where religions did match those within Bracknell Forest's Syllabus, there may not necessarily be a match with the way that schools had allocated religions to year groups.

She stated that having attended a recent SACRE Conference and having read various reports from the HMI and QCA, there were several references to (from John Keast) the progress of a feasibility study, around the possibility of Government support for a national strategy for RE. This was likely to be comparable to the Literacy Strategy. However as a result of recent staff changes within Government departments, it was uncertain how this would develop. The RE Council had become a little dispirited with the recent responses they had been receiving from Government departments.

Ofsted reports had recognised the interface between RE and the Community Cohesion agenda. Ofsted would now be looking at the extent to which teachers thought and planned towards community cohesion.

The Chairman thanked Jo Fageant for her informative update on curriculum matters and stated that a strong SACRE, might be a good example of strong community cohesion in itself.

38. Draft Bracknell Forest SACRE's Annual Report 2006/07 (attached)

SACRE's Associate Adviser, Jo Fageant presented the Annual Report 2006-07. She stated that she had used last year's report and the minutes of the last three meetings as a basis for the Annual Report. She highlighted that she had presented the Standards information in a slightly different format on page 15, to acknowledge the difficulties faced around Key Stages 1-3.

She also circulated a revised paragraph to replace paragraphs 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 as follows:

2.3.1 Termly meetings have been provided for RE subject leaders. The format has been a presentation and then discussion and follow up. The Autumn 2006 meeting looked at the new Agreed Syllabus with three subject leaders explaining what they had done followed by an activity in groups to plan a unit of work for about six weeks. Spring 2007 looked at Sacred texts. Summer 2007 started with a presentation on 'Special People' followed by another, by two subject leaders, on work developed in their schools and in networking together. Each of the meetings was well attended with approximately 20 teachers at each one – about two thirds of the Primary subject leaders.

The Chairman welcomed this addition and thanked Jo Fageant for a deeper and broader report.

Members confirmed that they were happy for attendance and apologies at meetings to be publicly recorded in the Annual Report.

The Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries congratulated the SACRE on the work that they had undertaken over the past year and beyond. He stated that he was heartened by the strength of Bracknell's SACRE and the

commitment of all its members. He hoped that members would continue to promote RE in schools.

The Chairman thanked the Director and added that he was also delighted that Bracknell's SACRE experienced such a strong attendance and commitment from members. He had been made aware of other SACREs that were not nearly as well attended and active.

The Chairman stated that Jo Fageant would put together a final version of the Annual Report in consultation with the Chairman. Once finalised, the Annual Report would then be e-mailed to all members for confirmation and then sent on to the QCA.

(Action: Jo Fageant/ Gordon Anderson)

39. **Review of SACRE's Development Plan 2005-09 (attached)**

The Chairman provided an update on each priority as follows:

Priority 1: In terms of training programmes, there had been good representation when opportunities had arisen.

Priority 2: This was covered last year.

Priority 3: It was noted that there was a lack of a flow of information from primary and secondary co-ordinators. There were still challenges under a) and b). c), d) and e) were progressing well.

f) Any updated information from members on this would be welcomed. Jo Fageant reported that she would be doing some work in this area and would pass on the information she gathered.

Priority 4: The commissioning of a review was now likely to take place in the New Year.

Priority 5: The Chairman proposed that this exercise could be part or fully completed by members completing self evaluation forms. It would be very helpful to get every members input on this.

In terms of Priority 4a), Jo Fageant reported that other authorities had tried to find ways to address this action and it was proving to be an on-going difficulty. Whilst SACRE had a remit to monitor, they were not able to request this information from schools.

The Chairman suggested that one way in which SACRE could raise its profile was to consider awarding prizes to primary/secondary pupils who had done exceptionally well in RE. Members agreed that this was a good idea and further suggested that perhaps an evening event culminating in an award presentation could be arranged.

Kusum Trikha stated that in terms of priority 3(b), which related to cultural development, that there were many opportunities within Bracknell to learn in this area. She stated that there were a number of Hindu social functions taking place in October/November and that she would forward an invite to all SACRE members to the events.

(Action: Martin Surrell)

40. **Any other business**

The Chairman reported that a letter had been received from Ofsted in relation to Brakenhale School. The letter stated that Brakenhale's standards in RE were below average and achievement in RE was inadequate, this was clearly an area of concern for SACRE. Martin Surrell advised that the school would need to address the issues raised by Ofsted by putting together an action plan.

The Chairman asked that SACRE be kept informed of developments on this and the progress made by the School.

41. **Dates of future meetings**

The dates of future meetings were noted as:

Tuesday 4 March 2008 (Council Chamber, Easthampstead House)
Wednesday 9 July 2008 (Bedford Room, Easthampstead Park Mansion)
and Thursday 6 November. (Council Chamber, Easthampstead House)

CHAIRMAN