

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
7 NOVEMBER 2013
5.00 - 6.35 PM**



Present:

David Fawcett, Church of England (Chairman)
John Baildam, The Free Churches
Ken Blanton, The Free Churches
Mr Christopher Smith, The Free Churches
Carol Nicholls, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Arfan Rashid, Muslim faith
David Fawcett, Church of England (Chairman)
Mark Olney, Church of England
Councillor Andy Blatchford, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Will Davison, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Clifton Thompson, Bracknell Forest Council
Madeline Diver, Associations Representing Teachers (VOICE)
Kathy Hadfield, Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Jo Fageant, SACRE Adviser
Martin Surrell, Senior Adviser
Frank Reid, British Humanist Association

Apologies for absence were received from:

Rabbi Zvi Solomons, Jewish faith

12. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. Matters Arising

Minute 5: It was reported that the recent meeting for R.E co-ordinators had been well attended.

Minute 7: It was noted that the Head of R.E had been contacted at Edgbarrow School and it was hoped to arrange for some Edgbarrow pupils to attend the summer meeting of SACRE.

14. Report on the Royal Maundy Service

SACRE members had an opportunity to see the Maundy money for 2013. The Chairman reported that Maundy money was distributed by the Queen on the Thursday before Good Friday each year.

15. **Representative from the Humanist Association**

Mr Frank Reid was welcomed by the Chairman and invited to address the Group.

Mr Frank Reid stated that he wanted the Group to understand his background and the reasons as to why he became a Humanist and the qualities that he felt he could offer to the Group, if he were to become a member of the Group.

He made the following points:

- He had been raised as a Catholic and had a very strict upbringing. He had attended a Catholic primary and secondary school and his life had revolved around church throughout his youth. There were a number of aspects of Catholicism that he felt at odds with at this time.
- His first serious girlfriend was of the Church of England faith and he found this to be much broader than Catholicism. He was then introduced to the concept of atheism and later Humanism.
- Humanism was morality without the supernatural, living life using ethics and philosophy as guidance and learning how to get along with people as best you can. He became a member of the British Humanist Association and was informed of the vacancy that existed on the Bracknell Forest SACRE. He had attended other SACRE's and was inspired by the members of these groups and their tolerance.
- He stated that 50% of people were now not religious; Humanists often bonded with religious representatives of SACRE as they shared ethics and philosophy but just didn't share a belief in god.
- He felt a Humanist representative could offer a non religious perspective and their philosophical and ethical beliefs.

The chairman thanked Mr Reid for his attendance and presentation and stated that SACRE would contact him with regard to membership of the Group.

Following discussion, the Group agreed to write to Mr Reid to thank him for his attendance at the meeting but to inform him that the Group did not wish to co-opt a Humanist representative at this time.

(Action: Martin Surrell)

16. **Provisional Examination Results**

The Group considered provisional examination results for 2013-14 and noted that performance was very similar to last academic year and this was pleasing.

17. **Press Release: More than half of schools found to be failing pupils on religious education**

It was reported that the biggest weakness of R.E was the lack of specialist R.E teachers in the lower secondary years. Nationally, evidence showed that teachers lacked confidence and subject knowledge. Structures in schools that enabled teachers to teach R.E were also important.

It was noted that most primary schools did not have specialist teachers and that R.E subject leaders often changed and so a build up of expertise wasn't developed.

The Group felt that an audit of local secondary schools and how R.E was taught in each school would be useful across the Borough. The Group could then consider any disparities in teaching across schools. It would also be valuable at this point to ask

primary school teachers to comment on how they felt the locally agreed syllabus had bedded in to their schools.

It was agreed that a questionnaire would be sent to all schools to ask about their R.E provision and for primary schools how the locally agreed syllabus had bedded in.

(Action: Jo Fageant)

18. Case Study: Effective religious education and interfaith dialogue: Redbridge Ambassadors of Faith and Belief (AFaB)

The Group considered the case study but noted that Bracknell Forest did not have the same level of diversity as Redbridge and as a result the project would not be as relevant.

19. Religious Education: Realising the Potential

This item was considered in conjunction with Minute 17.

20. Locally Agreed Syllabus and Related Training

It was reported that the group of primary teachers that had attended the recent training session were very enthused by the session. The session provided the opportunity to consider religion in their local area and local religious history and to use this to enrich learning in the classroom.

In terms of potential leaders, Ann Andrews and Kate Reece were suggested.

Jo Fageant reported that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council were offering a joint primary and secondary training day to teachers on 31 May 2013. It was anticipated that there would be enough primary representatives but not secondary and these places could be made available to Bracknell Forest teachers.

21. Any Other Business

- **Religious Education Council's Revised Guidance on the R.E Curriculum**
It was reported that this was non-statutory guidance which attempted to address issues raised by the recent Ofsted report.

When SACRE undertook its next review of the syllabus this guidance was likely to be very influential. It would now be the core document referred to, for all future developments in R.E and as a result SACRE members needed to be mindful of it.

It was reported that the guidance was quite a flexible document and open to a wide range of interpretation. One of the key differences between this guidance and the syllabus that Bracknell Forest currently had in place was that the guidance didn't include the eight level scale, which measured children's progress. It was not clear what the eight level scale had been replaced with.

The guidance had been launched on 25 October 2013 in the House of Lords and was currently being discussed in various venues across the country.

- **Responsibilities of Governors for R.E in their Schools**

It was reported that these papers had emerged from an all party working group and could be used as the basis of a meeting with governors that was scheduled to take place early in the summer term.

- **Annual SACRE Report 2012-13**

This report would be finalised by Jo Fageant and then sent to all schools and NASACRE with a letter from the Chairman and would be available on the Council's website.

(Action: Martin Surrell/Priya Patel)

It was noted that membership of the Group needed to be checked and updated where necessary.

(Action: Priya Patel)

- **Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality Research Project (Derby University)**

Madeline Diver reported that she had participated in the project and would share the findings with the Group. She stated that it was encouraging to see that discrimination had reduced in comparison to ten years ago. It was agreed that the project findings would be emailed to the Group and added to the Council's website.

(Action: Priya Patel)

- **Interfaith Week – November 2013**

Flyer to be circulated to the Group.

(Action: Priya Patel)

- **Accord Inclusivity Award 2014**

The Group felt that as Bracknell Forest did not have a high level of diversity, this award should not be pursued.

- **NASACRE Newsletter**

It was reported that the links in this newsletter led to some interesting documents.

22. **Dates of Future Meetings**

20 March 2014

10 July 2014 (Education Centre)

13 November 2014