

Overview of CW policies submitted to Bracknell Forest SACRE

December 2016

Aim of the Policy scrutiny:

To ascertain the extent to which Bracknell Forest Schools are complying with statutory requirement

To gain an insight into the perceived aims of Collective Worship in local schools

To evaluate the quality of local collective worship policy

Responses

Responses were received from 14 schools out of a possible 25

13 of those returned Collective Worship Policies (Wildmoor Heath, Woodenhill, Harmans Water, Meadowvale, New Scotland Hill, Uplands, Sandy Lane, Ascot Heath Infant, College Town, Owlsmoor, Whitegrove, Wildridings; Easthampstead Park)

1 returned an RE policy (The Pines)

Commentary

All the schools which responded showed awareness of the statutory requirement and indicated that they endeavour to meet the legal requirements of collective worship, but one or two of the policies suggested that there are issues with complying fully with the legislation.

12 of the 13 schools made it clear that they offer worship that is inclusive of other faiths, but at the same time broadly or mainly Christian. One school (SL) however, has indicated that they are offering worship of a non-religious nature. In all other respects the policy of is very fulsome and offers a coherent rationale for what they are doing. Concerning however, is the inclusion of a veiled request for a determination – which is as far as I know the first that SACRE has heard of this. Equally concerning is the fact that SACRE does not seem to have a procedure for considering determinations. The 1988 Education Act suggest that it is up to the SACRE/LA to decide on procedure.

10 of the 13 schools have dedicated Collective Worship Policies, setting out the aims, procedures and details of collective worship.

2 of the schools (EP & CT) have combined RE and Collective Worship Policies, one of which contained very little detail about collective worship.

1 of the schools (WHth) has an SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) Policy which has appendices on RE, PSHE and CW.

Most of the policies made reference to the aims of CW as set out by the 1994 additional guidance on Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools (circular 1/94). SMSC aims are also recognised by many of the schools and references made to school values and the UN charter on the Rights of the child. One school directly quoted Ofsted guidance on Collective worship. Most of the schools are clearly aiming to provide a daily act of worship; the exception to this may be the secondary school as

the policy has little detail although there is a recognition that the CW should be daily. The details given refer only to weekly assemblies for particular year groups.

Unlike the policies in most curriculum areas, few of the policies were broken into sections and most were descriptive of the procedures for worship, detailing organisation of acts of worship and assemblies. Most referred to the kind of activities that pupils would engage in (singing, reflection, response, participation and prayer). Some referred to visits from outside agencies (churches & local mosques for example). Some even included timetables and information about who would be leading. This is unusual in a policy, which usually focuses on the bigger picture rather than the minutiae.

3 of the policies suggested that collective worship is subject to monitoring and evaluation, looking at the impact of worship on the school community. Most of the others referred only to revision of the policy rather than its implementation.

The dates of writing and revision of some of the policies suggested that the request for a policy was instrumental in the creation of the policies.

Conclusion

The scrutiny reveals that schools are aware of their duty and that for the most part are making an effort to provide pupils with something meaningful. They are aware of the relevant legislation and provide assemblies on a regular basis. It would be interesting to investigate further to see how well the policies are adhered to and what the procedure is in the 13 schools that did not respond.

Suggested Actions

- A further request to schools that have not replied?
- An offer to participate and evaluate acts of worship?
- Writing of a sample policy?
- Create a procedure for determinations?
- Organise some training on CW for schools?