

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
04 MARCH 2008
(5.00 pm- 7.00 pm)

Present:

The Free Churches:
Rev M. Bentley
Mrs I. Robinson
Mrs P. Ridgway

Roman Catholic Churches
Ms L. Birley
Mrs A. Gibbons

Other Religions:
Mrs K. Trikha (Hindu Faith)

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

Associations representing Teachers:
Mrs S. Hunt
Mr C. Hickson
Mrs F. Allen

Bracknell Forest Borough Council:
Councillor Blatchford
Councillor Burrows

Co-opted Members:
Dr K. Hadfield (Baha'i)
Ms G. Ledsham (Quaker)

Observers:
Mr A. Rashid
Mr D. Fawcett

In Attendance: Mrs J. Fageant, SACRE's Associate Adviser
Mr R. Welch, Principal Adviser Education, Children's Services and Libraries
Mrs P. Patel (Democratic Services Officer)
Mr B. Allison (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Kathleen Nugent, Julie Mintern, Martin Surrell, and Councillors Thompson, Kensall and Mrs Hayes.

42. **Welcome [prayer to be led by Colin Hickson]**

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

43. **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 13 November 2007**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 13 November 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. **Matters Arising**

Members were advised that the SACRE Annual Report 2006/07 had been finalised and copies were available on request.

45. **The New SACRE Constitution and Membership (attached)**

It was noted that the proposed Constitution had been agreed by the Executive Member for Education and Libraries and was now the official constitution of Bracknell Forest SACRE.

The SACRE clerk had written to all other major religious groups as outlined in the Agreed Syllabus and members were advised that a formal response had been received from the Board of Deputies of British Jews who had nominated Marcia Purnell from Reading Hebrew Congregation as their representative to attend SACRE meetings. No response had been received from the Muslim or Buddhist groups. The Chairman stated that he was using contacts in Slough to attempt to find an appropriate Sikh representative, but added that he would welcome the ideas of other members on the matter.

It was noted that one vacancy remained for the Church of England group, but it was hoped that David Fawcett would be nominated.

In the Teacher's Union group it was reported that neither PAT nor SHA had proposed a representative, it was stated that the SACRE clerk would continue to work on this.

The Chairman reported that he had assured Kathy Hadfield that she could remain as a co-opted member representing the Baha'i faith, but that it should not be taken as a permanent Baha'i slot, as it was possible that SACRE might wish to appoint another minority group representative sometime in the future. SACRE supported the chairman's action.

46. **Budget Report for 2007/08 and Expected Budget for 2008/09 (verbal)**

The Principal Adviser (Education and Libraries) reminded Members that SACRE had been allocated a budget of £3356 and that if any further sum was added this would be noted in the next Annual Report and discussed at the next SACRE meeting.

It was reported that last year the most significant source of expenditure had been the purchase of artefacts and the costs involved with attending the joint SACRE conference. It was noted that next year the update of the artefacts catalogue would also be a source of expenditure and would need to be considered. The Chairman stated that he had been assured that because SACRE had under-spent during the last financial year, its future budget would not be reduced in future years.

(Action: Bob Welch)

47. **Artefacts Update and Review (verbal)**

Mrs Sam Hunt reported that SACRE had spent £900 on new religious artefacts – concentrating on Hindu, Jewish and Sikh collections as these had the greatest demand. The Chairman declared that he had authorised an additional £400 to be allocated for the purchase of artefacts which he asked the meeting to ratify, this was agreed by members. In addition Mrs Hunt asked if SACRE would consider an additional allocation of funds – as an imminent school trip to Israel would present a good opportunity to purchase Christian artefacts which were difficult to obtain in the UK. The Chairman felt that money should be spent cautiously; as a result the meeting agreed that an allocation of up to £500 be made for Mrs Hunt to spend.

It was reported that over the summer term Mrs Hunt would photograph all current artefacts and update their descriptions over the course of a day. It was then proposed that SACRE reprint this updated Artefacts catalogue in the autumn term and send it to all local schools and NQTS. The possibility of publishing the catalogue in an electronic form was also debated and the Principal Adviser was asked to investigate the costs involved in each case. The meeting decided to approve the reprinting of the catalogue in principle, depending on the costs involved as reported by the Principal Adviser.

On the issue of the loaning of religious artefacts it was reported that this had been erratic; while Primary schools had often utilised the service, secondary schools had been less keen to do so. One of the problems which discouraged schools from using this service was reported to be confusion over the loaning of the artefacts. While the two people conducting the loaning of artefacts were hard-working, it was reported that they lacked an in-depth knowledge of the artefacts and could only use the artefact catalogue which caused problems in communications with schools. It was suggested that the Education Centre would benefit from a person dedicated to the loaning of artefacts.

It was felt that the fact that two people were working on this task was positive – since this offered a continuity of service if either individual left the Council's service. It was noted that an in-depth knowledge of the artefacts was beyond the remit of these individuals and that the teachers and religious specialists in schools should be supplying this knowledge.

It was reported that in-service training sessions (illustrating the correct handling and proper uses of religious artefacts) continued to be run for primary school teachers. It was hoped that attendance would be good as this might allow the knowledge imparted to be cascaded through course attendees to other staff at their schools.

Finally, Mrs Hunt reported problems surrounding discontinuity in the artefact catalogue. Originally she had worked closely with the individual who had catalogued every artefact and stored this information electronically. Subsequently, this person had left the employment of the Education Centre and after several different people had filled the vacant position - the whereabouts of these records within the ICT system was lost. The Chairman expressed concern over this issue and asked Mrs Hunt to continue to pursue this matter.

(Action: Sam Hunt and Bob Welch)

48. Brakenhale School - RE Inspection Report Update (verbal)

It was reported that a recent subject-focussed Ofsted survey inspection programme at Brakenhale School had revealed all aspects of the school's Religious Education to be inadequate. The Principal Adviser reported an update from Martin Surrell who had discussed the school's issues with the head of RE. It was reported that long term measures in response to the issues would include; a review of the provision of Key Stage 4 and the implementation of a new approach to raise the profile of the subject in the eyes of pupils.

It was noted that Brakenhale's problems highlighted the need for a greater awareness of the new syllabus since the secondary curriculum would be revised by September 2008. Furthermore, it was pointed out that this could present an opportunity to look at the implementation of the syllabus. The Associate Adviser to SACRE commented that national studies showed that schools were in general slow to respond to new syllabuses.

The Principal Adviser reported that three teachers had benefited from retraining at Brakenhale and would cascade this knowledge back into their departments. It was also announced that the Associate Adviser to SACRE had looked into a meeting with the heads of RE from local schools to discuss and analyse common problems and share ideas. This was reported to be necessary as Ofsted reports no longer gave the level of detail on specific subjects that they used to. Members enquired about the viability of requesting help from the governing body of the school. The Chairman reported that this might be problematic given his experiences of requesting decisions or help from governing bodies. The Principal Adviser said that he could take this request to the governor support team.

A Member commented that many governing bodies often felt that it was important to have a governor who had a level of expertise in a subject area, before they offered their assistance.

(Action: Bob Welch)

49. QCA/NASACRE National Conference 17 January 2008 - RE and Community Cohesion: the future for SACREs (attached)

Louise Birley reported that this had been an informative conference which had focussed on community cohesion.

SACRE's Associate Adviser advised members that the speaker at the conference had asserted that his model of practice had worked best where he had worked with schools to complete a self-evaluation form for RE. The Associate Adviser reported that a similar measure – an independent four year programme organised by West Berkshire SACRE had received a positive outcome although it had not been universally popular. It was reported that this programme had been funded by the LA from the SACRE's budget. It was suggested that a similar programme could be looked into by Bracknell. The Associate Adviser said that she would report back after the West Berkshire SACRE meeting.

On the issue of how well SACRE members knew each other the Chairman pointed out that while some members might feel that they would like a chance to get to know other members better, others had known each other for a long time. These members

had been SACRE members for much of its existence and this continuity of experience was one of the Bracknell SACRE's strengths. Members acknowledged this but also felt that while Bracknell SACRE had a diverse membership it did have a Christian dominance and wondered how other faith groups felt about this. The Chairman felt that this was SACRE's purpose – each member brought his or her opinion on a specific issue – rather than every member being aware of each other's views. Also he pointed out that Bracknell SACRE had given a considerable amount of training to its members as well as opportunities to meet religious counterparts in informal situations. Members noted the various occasions in which Bracknell SACRE had met members of other religions in Hindu temples, Jewish Synagogues and also at specific lunch meetings.

The Associate Adviser to SACRE reported that at the last meeting of the Reading SACRE she had been part of a wide ranging debate of the different perspectives of the members. Each member had briefly explained why they had an interest in attending the Reading SACRE – and this prompted much debate. Admittedly Reading SACRE had far fewer members than Bracknell Forest which had facilitated their discussion but it was suggested that members of Bracknell Forest SACRE might be able to bring in a written explanation of their interests and motivations which could be circulated. It was agreed that this could be discussed again at a future meeting.

(Action: Jo Fageant)

50. Bracknell Forest SACRE Prizes to Pupils for Achievement in RE - Discussion (verbal)

The proposal that there should be a prize for achievement in religious education was unanimously agreed, but it was felt that there should be differentiation between primary and secondary levels and also that there should be different prizes for the different key stages – 1, 2,3,4 and 5. Members highlighted the need to broaden the scope of the prizes beyond the academic so that they would reward other merits like social mindedness or acts towards community cohesion. A working party of three volunteers (Samantha Hunt, Paula Ridgway and Kusum Trikha) was set up to consider this issue, liaise with the Principal Adviser for Education, Children's Services and Libraries and put together some draft proposals for the next SACRE meeting.

(Action: Samantha Hunt, Paula Ridgway, Kusum Trikha and Bob Welch)

51. NASACRE /Westhill Awards 2009/10 for Young Inter-faith Projects (attached)

Members felt that Bracknell Forest SACRE should submit a project for this award – but that it was important that it was professionally presented. It was agreed that the target should be to submit a project for next year's award (2009/10), which was likely to have a deadline of March 2009.

An idea was put forward that the project centre upon a totem pole of how pupils feel about their faith with an image or symbol to represent every faith in Bracknell Forest. This could include an exhibition from each school, with pupils expressing how they feel about their faith through a series of visual images. This idea was welcomed and supported by members. A working group to oversee and develop this project was set up, and comprised: Kathy Hadfield, Felicity Allen and Gill Ledsham.

The Chairman stated that he looked forward to receiving a progress report from the working group at the next meeting.

(Action: Kathy Hadfield, Felicity Allen and Gill Ledsham)

52. **NASACRE AGM - 8 May 2008 (verbal)**

It was reported that this meeting would take place in London on Tuesday 8 May 2008. Anne Gibbons was appointed to attend this meeting on behalf of Bracknell Forest SACRE.

(Action: Anne Gibbons)

53. **Berkshire SACREs' Conference - June 2008 (verbal)**

It was reported that this Conference would take place in Easthampstead Park Conference Centre from 6- 9 pm on 18 June 2008. The Keynote speaker would be Allen Brine (Senior HMI for R.E) on the Role of RE in the promotion of Community Cohesion. SACRE members were asked to inform the Chairman if they wished to attend this function, but were requested not to apply unless they were sure they could make the date, as every cancellation would incur a cost to SACRE.

(Action: All)

54. **Self Evaluation of Bracknell Forest SACRE (parts 1 and 2) (attached)**

Members agreed that they had met all their responsibilities in terms of those outlined on page 22 of the report.

Members undertook the self evaluation exercise and agreed the following:

Part 1: STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1a Compliance and Time Allocation for RE:	DEVELOPING/ESTABLISHED
1b Public Examination Entries in RE:	ESTABLISHED
1c Standards and Achievement: including standards at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, GCSE, AS and A2 level:	DEVELOPING/ESTABLISHED
1d Quality of Teaching:	ESTABLISHED
1e Quality of Leadership and management:	DEVELOPING
1f Recruitment and Retention Issues: Level of Specialist Provision:	DEVELOPING
1g Resources:	ADVANCED

Part 2: MANAGEMENT OF THE SACRE AND PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LA AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS

2a SACRE meetings:	ESTABLISHED
2b Membership and Training:	ADVANCED

2c Improvement/ Development Planning:	ADVANCED
2d Professional and Financial Support:	ADVANCED
2e Information and Advice:	DEVELOPING
2f Partnerships with Other Key Stakeholders:	DEVELOPING

With regards to key areas 1d, 1e and 1f, it was felt that some of the requirements involved in the higher criteria were not compatible with the role of SACRE or appropriate to its setting in Bracknell Forest.

55. **Dates of Future Meetings**

Wednesday 9 July 2008 – at Easthampstead Park Conference Centre.
Thursday 6 November 2008

CHAIRMAN

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