

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
3 MARCH 2016
5.00 - 6.30 PM**



Present:

David Fawcett, Church of England (Chairman)
Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Bracknell Forest Council
Chris Cooper, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Councillor Ms Moira Gaw, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE, Bracknell Forest Council
Carol Logan, Church of England
Councillor Mrs Isabel Mattick, Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Ms Ash Merry, Bracknell Forest Council
Mark Olney, Church of England
Arfan Rashid, Muslim faith
Steve Rollins, Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Ruth Jackson, NAHT Headteacher
Anne Andrews, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education
Chris Salt, Bracknell Forest Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Rev Paul Collins, Church of England
Madeline Diver, Associations Representing Teachers (VOICE)
Kathy Hadfield, Co-opted Member
Manfred Lemke, The Free Churches
Rabbi Zvi Solomons, Jewish faith

93. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising therefrom:

(1) Minute 89 (Exam Results 2014/15)

The validated data for the 2015 exam results was now available and Chris Salt circulated a summary of the KS4 school performance figures in GCSE Religious Studies for Bracknell Forest Schools together with a resume of national data for Religious Studies entries and grade attainment over the period 1993 to 2015. The Committee was pleased to note the continuing strong performance of Edgbarrow School, where 100% of the 44 entrants achieved A*-C grades. While some of the other schools appeared to have performed less well, it was noted that at Ranelagh, for instance, entry for the Religious Studies exam was compulsory rather than optional which inevitably led to a range of grades being achieved. Nationally, the number of entrants for Religious Studies GCSE had risen steadily over the past 20 years to a current high of 295,730. In 2015, 72.2% had attained A*-C grades compared to 69% across Bracknell Forest.

(2) Minute 91 (NASACRE)

The Committee agreed that Anne Andrews should represent it at the NASACRE Conference due to be held on 17 May 2016 and it was requested that the necessary reservation be made.

(Action: Lizzie Rich)

(3) Minute 91 (Inter Faith Week)

Those who had attended said the Inter Faith Week meeting had been very interesting, with speakers from six different faiths contributing. Longer notice of such events in future would be appreciated.

94. Pan-Berkshire hub

The Committee considered a paper containing a proposal for collaborative working of the six Berkshire SACREs from the summer term 2016, to be led by the Jan Lever consultancy. The proposal comprised two main elements with estimated costs as follows:

- To strengthen the pan-Berkshire Hub, develop communication and lead on the agreed syllabus review - £750 for each SACRE
- For a Hub co-ordinator and project co-ordinator to develop the Crossing the Bridges project, including a system for booking and evaluating visits to places of worship and development of an electronic directory - £1,700 for each SACRE, including £750 for the hub, £750 for Crossing the Bridges and £200 for the Directory compilation

The Committee was favourably disposed towards the proposals in principle, but noted there was no budget currently set aside to meet such expenditure. The Council was in a period of severe financial constraint with most budgets faced with making savings or at best no increase. Successful bids for additional funding may be restricted to those areas in which the Council had a statutory responsibility, for example, for work relating to the syllabus review (where it was essential to work jointly across Berkshire). It was hoped that the forthcoming Conference on British Values would generate some income which could be used to meet some of the expenditure.

After further discussion, the Committee outlined its response to the proposal on the specific questions for consideration of each Berkshire SACRE as follows:

1. Agree in principle with the proposal to appoint a Hub co-ordinator.
2. In the light of feedback from other SACREs to the proposals, to work with Officers to see if budget can be identified to support this.
- 3/4. While the Crossing the Bridges project was supported in principle, there was no budget currently available to fund it. Agreed that further work should be carried to see whether this could be funded in the next 2-3 years, including the possibility of seeking contributions from partners.
5. Agreed that the Chairman would represent the Committee at Hub meetings.
6. Agreed to schedule future meetings during the second or third week of the second half of each school term.
7. Agreed that the Jan Lever consultancy should lead the proposed work as far as the syllabus review is concerned.

(Action: Anne Andrews/David Fawcett/Chris Salt)

95. British Values Conference

The British Values Conference had been arranged to take place on Monday 18 April 2016 at the Education Centre, Easthampstead Park, with Lat Blaylock as tutor for the

day. The one day course would provide teachers of RE in Key Stages 1-3 with 12 high quality learning strategies to promote values through RE.

Reservations to date numbered 20 (from Bracknell and RBWM). It was hoped that further places would be taken up and it was agreed that the Conference be opened for bookings from other Berkshire authorities and advertised across the Diocese. Overnight accommodation (on 17 April) at Easthampstead Park was requested for the tutor.

(Action: Anne Andrews/Chris Salt)

96. Teacher Training

Anne Andrews reported to the Committee on the recent teacher training session which had been held at Easthampstead Park on 1 March 2016. Although more places had been booked, only 8 had attended. Nevertheless a successful twilight had resulted with a focus on age-related expectations, with Key Stage 2/3 teachers explaining what they would expect to see coming through from Key Stage 1. It was clear that the approach to what was taught varied quite significantly from one school to another and this would be an important area to address in the forthcoming syllabus review. Arising from the discussion, it was suggested that the RE Department at Ranelagh School could be approached to see if they were willing to encourage shared use of their resources.

(Action: Anne Andrews)

97. SACRE Newsletter

The Committee was pleased to receive a copy of the latest SACRE News, noting the separate section in this issue relating to collective worship. Chris Salt was asked to check that the newsletter had been issued to all schools and also to arrange for issue to all schools an extract from the NASACRE Briefing (Issue 10) relating to advice for schools about Ramadan.

(Action: Chris Salt)

98. NASACRE briefing

The Committee received from NASACRE a copy of its SACRE Briefing (Issue 10).

Arising from the Briefing, the Committee considered two specific areas relating to syllabuses, teaching and worship in schools following a number of reports that had been issued and summarised in a detailed paper from the Chair of NASACRE, David Hampshire.

A national framework for RE?

The current position was extremely diverse given the variation in curricula across the UK, 174 different agreed syllabuses in local authorities in England and Wales, a range of syllabuses in different Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses as well as several thousand in academy schools. The general view expressed was that there should be a nationally set core framework, covering around 30% of the basics and essentials of the approach to religion and belief education. This would then leave the remainder to be set in locally agreed syllabuses.

Collective worship

A number of views were expressed about the recommendation that the requirement for schools to hold a daily act of broadly Christian collective worship should be abolished. Members generally agreed that there was value in having a period for

spiritual reflection, in the context of Christian or other moral values. This did not necessarily need to take the form of an act of worship, although some thought there should be a place for stories and readings, for singing and for prayer. It was recognised that the present situation where the requirements of the legislation about collective worship were largely ignored was unsatisfactory. However, the Committee concluded by taking the view that any move to make a change in the law was fraught with difficulty.

99. New GCSE

The Committee was informed of the new GCSE exam requirements being introduced from September 2016. At present, the only Examining Board to have received accreditation for GCSE in Religious Studies was AQA. The curriculum would pose questions for study about belief and values and how students could develop their own attitude towards religious issues. There would be an emphasis on study being fact focussed, with a requirement to study two religions.

It was important to obtain an early indication of which two religions would be selected for study in schools so that the right training could be offered. RBWM had already commenced a survey about this and Anne Andrews offered to prepare a questionnaire for Chris Salt to send to secondary schools in the Borough to ascertain the relevant information. It was noted that Manfred Lemke, the Free Churches representative, had access to school resources which may be useful in preparation for training for the new GCSE.

(Action: Anne Andrews/Chris Salt)

100. Any interfaith matters

None was reported.

101. The Toolkit

This was deferred for consideration at the next meeting, to be placed at the top of the agenda together with an item on the SACRE Development Plan.

(Action: Lizzie Rich)

102. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

103. Dates of Future Meetings

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting should be brought forward to Tuesday 21 June 2016, to avoid the Referendum due to take place on 23 June 2016.

(Action: Lizzie Rich/All to note)