

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
3 JULY 2023
5.00 - 6.50 PM**



Present:

Madeline Diver, Group C: Teachers' and Teachers' Representatives (Chair)
Ossie Anderson-Peled, Group A: Jewish representative
Ron Bailey, Group A: Free Church representative
Kathy Hadfield, Group A: Baha'i
Dilip Ladwa, Group A: Hindu representative
Abi Maclean, Group A: Free Church representative
Rajdip Marok-Dhanju, Group A: Sikh representative
Alan Montgomery, Group A: Humanist
Jo Perrett, Group A: Catholic representative
Dr Oludolapo Ogunbawo, Group B: Church of England representative
Ruth Jackson, Group C: Teachers' and Teachers' Representatives
Jo Roclawski, Group C: Teachers' and Teachers' Representatives
Councillor Tricia Brown, Group D: Bracknell Forest Education Authority
Councillor Naheed Ejaz, Group D: Bracknell Forest Education Authority
Anne Andrews, Oxford Diocese Advisor

Apologies for absence were received from:

Vicki Gibson, Group A: Free Churches
Father David Clues, Group B: Church of England
Rev Carol Dunk, Group B: Church of England representative
Tim Griffith, Group C: Teachers' and Teachers' Representatives
Clare Hawkins, Group C: Teachers' and Teachers' Representatives
Anna Kennedy, Group C: Teachers' and Teachers' Representatives
Councillor Ryan Frost, Group D: Bracknell Forest Education Authority
Tracey Bradshaw, Local Authority Advisor

72. Chair and Membership

SACRE was advised of membership changes following the results of the Borough Council elections. There had been changes to political control and new appointments to SACRE.

It was noted that the Council had appointed Councillors Brown, Ejaz and Frost as its representatives. This meant that Councillor Barnard who had been Chair was no longer a member.

Thanks was given to Councillor Barnard for all his support to SACRE.

73. Election of Chair

Proposed by Ron Bailey and seconded by Dilip Ladwa, Madeline Diver was elected as Chair for remainder of the academic year 2022/23.

74. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 15 March 2023 were approved.

75. **Matters Arising**

The new Members were welcomed to the Advisory Council.

76. **Verbal feedback from teachers and visitors to schools**

There were no updates from teachers and anyone who had gone into schools. It was hoped to have updates at the next meeting.

77. **NASACRE AGM feedback to include report on the analysis of Annual reports**

SACRE received a report introduced by Anne Andrews on the analysis of SACRE Annual reports. It was noted that in 2023 72 SACREs had submitted their annual report for 2021/22, 16 more than in 2022. This figure was similar to the number submitted in 2021 and would suggest that the main cause for not submitting a report in the previous year was the Covid-19 pandemic. The pattern of submission of reports was, however, more complicated with only 29 SACREs submitting a report in all three years, 37 submitting their report twice, 35 once and 52 not at all.

NASACRE had discussed the future of SACREs and how they could promote their work. SACREs needed to be adapting to changing times. The appointment of a humanist to SACRE indicated how Bracknell Forest was moving with the times.

There was a huge difference in funding and what SACREs were doing. They had a statutory duty to advise on religious education, but many failed to do so. This was something this SACRE needed to think about. The local authority could task SACRE with actioning whatever it might highlight.

The AGM had been extremely well attended with useful workshops. Anne stated that it had been well worth attending. Each SACRE could send two members. The next would be held on 20 May 2024. The location was not yet known but Anne encouraged SACRE to send two members next year. Bracknell Forest's ideas had not been shared this year.

Anne also encouraged colleagues to visit the NASACRE web site where the information and presentations were available.

Anne answered questions including on training for schools. Anne indicated training was provided for all schools within the local authority area. All were offered the same opportunity for RE network meetings. Bracknell Forest offered a very comprehensive service. SACRE members were welcome to attend the meetings.

She concluded by stating that there was to be a NASACRE training session on 13 July at 6.30pm on the annual reports which would be free to join.

78. **Feedback from any other NASACRE training attended**

It was noted that Alan Montgomery had attended a workshop on collective worship which was well received and very interesting.

Anne indicated that there would be more information on a project on collective worship in the coming year.

79. **The Bloom Review: Does government 'do God'?**

Madeline Diver introduced an item on a report entitled "Does Government 'do God'". It was noted that Colin Bloom had been appointed by the former Prime Minister, The

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP to deliver the Independent Faith Engagement Review in September 2019. A call for evidence that posed a series of questions around how those of all faiths, or none, perceived the government's engagement with faith organisations had run from November to December 2020.

The Bloom Review drew on over 21,000 responses to the call for evidence and examined how government should engage with faith groups in England. It included 22 recommendations. Madeline indicated that a summary of the recommendations circulated to the Inter-Faith Forum would also be circulated to SACRE.

Anne Andrews reminded SACRE that recommendation 7 supported much of what it had been promoting for some time.

Alan Montgomery drew attention to the reference to non-believers being true believers too. He was pleased that the promotion of values had been recognised as humanists had values too. He also welcomed the positive references to Humanist UK's support to those leaving controlling environments such as cults.

Ron Bailey drew attention to the importance of recognising the different terms defined in different faith's sacred texts. He added that there was a tendency to a siege mentality in some free churches with the redefining of some words. He suggested faiths and the words used were under attack for those in the free churches.

The report had been sent to local authorities with an instruction to take appropriate action by the end of the year.

Ossie Anderson-Peled drew attention to the protected characteristic of belief which also protected those without belief.

Anne reminded SACRE that the Government would consider and respond to the report but only recommendation 7 was relevant to SACRE. She stressed that they should support recommendation 7 as RE was important to creating a more inclusive society. There were minimum standards that the Government and OFSTED held schools responsible for. Some schools elsewhere were not meeting them.

Anne stressed the importance of keeping the roles of SACRE and the Inter-Faith Forum separate. Madeline confirmed that SACRE was only concerned with schools.

At this point, the meeting became inquorate.

It was agreed to proceed with the business on an informal basis.

Inquorate Meeting

SACRE continued on an informal basis as there was no longer a quorum due to the absence of all Group B representatives.

80. Updates on the hub (Real People, Real Faith films)

Anne Andrews gave updates on the hub.

The humanist, Baha'i and Buddhist films should be ready this week. The Humanist film had been sent for uploading.

The project had begun in 2019 and now provided a wide range of films. 6 films for each religion, 2 at each key stage. They were being well-used by teachers at all three stages.

The Hub was to meet next to consider whether all the Agreed Syllabus Conferences had been convened. They would be reflecting on conversations and the content of the syllabus going forward. SACRE would have a huge role to play in the development of the new syllabus. All six SACREs would need to approve the syllabus. Anne would be providing updates in due course.

81. **Presentation on Agreed Syllabus Conference**

Anne Andrews delivered a presentation from NASACRE on what an Agreed Syllabus Conference was. It was to be established approximately every five years to agree and recommend the syllabus to the local authorities. All councils had to approve the final syllabus. Any sub-committees established to undertake the work must have at least one member from each of the local authorities, known for the purpose of the Conference as committees.

The statutory requirement was that every local authority was required to establish and support the Agreed Syllabus Conference. It had to produce and recommend an agreed syllabus for RE, meeting in public. The Agreed Syllabus Conference should have a different Chair and Vice-Chair to SACRE.

It was noted that the Agreed Syllabus Conference had the same group structure as the SACRE and was made up of the same interest groups, but its members need not be the same as those on SACRE. There was no provision for co-opted members, so Humanist and Baha'i faiths would not have been represented had the Council not agreed that they should become full members of SACRE. The Council's responsibility was to convene the Agreed Syllabus Conference and implied a duty to provide funds and support for its work.

The Agreed Syllabus Conference would determine what should be taught as part of the syllabus. They could only recommend the amount of curriculum time to be devoted to religious education. At the very least they would expect schools to devote enough time to deliver the elements of the syllabus. Recommendation 7 of the Bloom Report, if accepted, would provide for a set minimum curriculum time.

Anne outlined the questions that the Agreed Syllabus Conference would need to consider. She reiterated that the local authority was responsible for convening the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

In response to questions, Anne indicated that the Agreed Syllabus Conference could take as long as it took to get all parties to agree the syllabus, but ideally by April 2025. It was anticipated that Agreed Syllabus Conference meetings would follow on directly from forthcoming SACRE meetings. The local authority would provide a clerk for both meetings. The advisers and chairs would play a key role in the work. Ann believed that there would be a degree of change required if they were to deliver a syllabus fit for the next five years. The existing syllabus could be found on the Council's web site. There was funding within the Hub to cover the costs of the work. Teachers and RE leaders had been invited to submit views but there had been little response. The aim would be to get them involved throughout the process. There was a legal requirement for Christianity to predominate but there was no national guidance beyond that. The Agreed Syllabus Conference could determine how other faiths were addressed, including what was known as the "other big six".

82. Local Authority to convene Annual Syllabus Conference

As the responsibility for setting up the conference lay with the Council, the Chair was therefore to ask the Council to convene the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

83. Discussion of the syllabus document sent in advance comparing the 3 syllabuses with the current one

The syllabuses had been sent out to all and would be recirculated. Feedback on these was requested by 13th July.

84. Any Other Business

Anne Andrew's invited articles for the next newsletter. These should be sent to Anne by the end of August.

Dilip Ladwa and Anne Andrews were to discuss making the most of a trip to the Mandir as a Hindu RE development day.

SACRE's attention was drawn to the Bracknell Forest Community Day on Saturday 8 July 2023.

85. Dates of Future Meetings

SACRE noted that, for operational reasons, the dates of the next two meetings had been changed. These would now take place at 5pm on Wednesday 15 November 2023 and Thursday 14 March 2024.

CHAIRMAN