

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21st SEPTEMBER 2020



Present:

GROUP A

Christian Denominations

The Baptists

Chris Davis MBE

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

Ruth Gill

Other Religions

Baha’l

Elizabeth Jenkerson

GROUP B

The Church of England

Richard Wharton

GROUP C

National Education Union (NEU)

Jackie Meering

National Association of Head teachers (NAHT)

Sian Carr

GROUP D

Southampton City Council (Harefield Ward)

Councillor Valerie Laurent

Southampton City Council (Bevois Ward)

Councillor Toqeer Kataria

Labour Councillor for Swaythling

Councillor Matt Bunday

Group D Substitute

Kate Martin

OTHERS (Non-voting)

Co-Opted Members:

Professional Adviser – Southampton City Council

Alison Philpott

In attendance

Southampton City Mission

Matthew Gwyn

Meeting Support Officers

Martin Ball

Samuel Dedman

1. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

AP noted that there has not be a volunteer to Chair SACRE, although EJ is willing to stand as Vice Chair for this meeting. EJ stated that the election can be confirmed during the next SACRE in November 2020 for who will Chair going forward. SACRE members agreed for this to be deferred until the next meeting.

Action: AP to include the election of the Chair at the top of the Agenda for November 2020 SACRE and AP can detail what Chairing SACRE entails to members before the meeting.

2. WELCOME, THANKS AND APOLOGIES

EJ welcomed those present to SACRE and acknowledged that this meeting is being held over Teams rather than face to face due to the Covic-19 restrictions. The apologies were listed:

Apologies:

The Roman Catholic Church	Steve Dedman
The Church of England	Sam Jordan
The Church of England	Rev Duncan Jennings
The Assemblies of God	Neil Maddock
South Hampshire Humanists	Mary Wallbank

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (January 2020) AND MATTERS ARISING

EJ explained that any disputed content of the previous minutes must be highlighted by the 24th of September 2020, after which the minutes will be considered approved.

EJ highlighted that SACRE is short of major representation and that if present members are aware of potential representatives, a recommendation for these potential members to join SACRE would be welcome.

AP acknowledged the service that Jackie Meering has given to SACRE over the years and if she is able to continue with SACRE it would be very welcome, but there is understanding if she wanted to step down.

4. MEMBER UPDATES OR CHANGES

Cllr Bunday has replaced Cllr Renyard on the membership and Cllr Bunday stated that he welcomed receiving any future communications regarding SACRE. EJ welcomed Cllr Bunday and highlighted that there is a lot of useful information on the NASACRE website, which details all that SACRE does and does not do. EJ stated that she would send Cllr Bundy a link to access this information.

5. REVIEW OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP GUIDANCE

AP stated that there needs to be a review to ensure that current guidance is being provided to schools and AP asked if there is a group willing to look over the guidance at an agreed upon meeting.

AP added that there also needs to be consideration in to the process for determination, as there has been queries regarding this from other SACREs and the legal team may have to attend to ensure that Southampton SACRE is compliant within the law.

AP highlighted that AP, EJ, SC, MG, and Cllr B have agreed to be in the group and the meetings should take place in the next two to three weeks.

Action: AP to contact members with a suitable date for the meeting.

6. MONITORING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MOVING FORWARD FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR

AP explained that in January 2020, SACRE members were on target to visit every school in the city to look at the Religious Education and collective worship by the end of 2020. Due to school closures as a result of Covid-19, this has not been achieved. 60% of the city schools were able to be visited before the closures so a reasonable overview was able to be observed. This included some schools that do not follow the syllabus but wanted to be involved in Southampton SACRE.

AP explained that schools have had to be creative around visiting places such as art galleries, local places of worship, and others, all of these comes with the implications around meeting potential strangers online, so there are a whole host of thinking, planning, and introductions to ensure there is an extra layer of safeguarding.

AP stated that there are various proposals for monitoring visits going forward:

- To ask schools to complete an RE audit, which can be updated in light of Covid-19. This would give a whole picture across the city
- To ask the schools to consider a summer term visit, which may still have to be carried out virtually.
- To agree to leave monitoring visits for this year, with the schools that have not had a visit to be top of the list for 2021

SC highlighted that it may be difficult schools to have additional monitoring. The most feasible decision could be to postpone visits until next year when they can be carried out more thoroughly and without adding extra pressure on schools. If a school requests a visit or has concerns, schools can request support from their RE leads.

Action: AP to contact Southampton schools to state if they have not had a monitoring visit and would like one, they can request that by headteacher request only and the monitoring cycle will look to resume in 2021, when the new syllabus will be introduced.

7. DISCUSSION OF HOW SACRE AND ITS MEMBERS CAN SUPPORT SCHOOLS POST-COVIC CLOSURE THROUGH ITS REMIT

SC explained that schools have been setting up more online teaching and if schools were to close again, there is a means to supply immediate education. Cllr T added that from his visits to schools, it is clear that they are much more prepared in case there is a need for children to return to be educated from home.

AP stated some schools contacted AP to ask what schools could offer regarding Religious Education, as there were some concerns regarding home learning being given to parents who may not have the knowledge to present correctly. AP stated that this has been a refreshing conversation with schools

who have sent AP activities and they are open to responses. AP noted that we want young people to be able to express themselves and schools have been giving it a lot of thought on how to do it but without limiting the contextualised and enquire aspect. Some schools have used cycles of enquiry, which AP stated that she will have to follow up with.

RW noted that it would be a good gesture from SACRE to thank the teachers for everything they have been doing during this challenging time.

MG stated that Southampton City Mission continued to operate during lockdown and did 70 live online assemblies on YouTube and social media, which included stories, and challenges. Also, the Questions of Faith programmes are available online for schools. Schools are essentially assessing the same content online that would have been delivered in person. There has also been transition support for year 6 to year 7 and there was a good response from schools for this. It's Your Move resources were provided to over 1000 children. MG offered to help any members who may want to use a similar platform in the future. MG added that schools are asking City Mission for input for the Harvest Festival as there is still a desire to contribute in helping to feed the city, particularly during this time.

Action: EJ to draft a letter to schools thanking them for the outstanding work that has been done during and post-lockdown, and AP to distribute.

8. MEMBERS LOCAL AND NATIONAL UPDATES

EJ stated that the NASACRE AGM, which was due to take place in May 2020, is going to be held on May 24th 2021.

9. AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

EJ explained that an agreed syllabus conference is a duty from SACRE to monitor the fulfilment of the agreed syllabus. Every 5 years an agreed syllabus conference is called and the members of this conference work together to review and make any changes that they deem necessary. SACRE must officially agree to do this.

EJ stated that formally calling the Agreed Syllabus Conference is being carried out in conjunction with other Hampshire SACREs including Southampton, Portsmouth, Hampshire, and Isle of Wight.

AP explained that the last agreed syllabus conference Living Difference 2 became Living Difference 3, this was in 2015/2016, meaning SACRE are now due to meet the 5-year statutory duty to review the syllabus by the end of 2021. It is the syllabus that all the maintained schools follow for teaching Religious Education. Most academies follow the syllabus, although there are some that have their own or a national syllabus for their academy chain. Catholic schools also have their own syllabus. The syllabus has a number of aspects that leads it to follow the statutory duty, the purpose includes:

- The idea that to live a religious life means to subscribe to certain propositional beliefs
- The idea that to live a religious life means to adhere to certain practices
- The idea that to live a religious life means to exist, to be in and with the world, in a trustful manner or with a particular kind of awareness

It is clear in the revision to discern what is valuable both from living a religious life or one of a non-religious perspective. Essentially trying to engage the young people of Southampton of the broad way in which people live their lives in the 21st century.

AP explained that the Living Difference syllabus is a process of enquiry in to concepts for example love, hope, community, or justice. They fall in to three main groups:

- Group A – Concepts common to all people, for example: remembering, specialness, celebration, rights.
- Group B - Concepts that are shared by many religions, for example: God, worship, symbolism, the sacred.
- Group C – Concepts distinctive to particular religions or non-religious tradition, for example: Dukkha, Trinity, Khalsa, redemption.

AP noted that assessing progress was changed a lot in the last review, where some schools found themselves in a position where levels of primary schools were removed by the government and SACRE had to find a new way of communicating an age-related expectation. From an early years perspective there are early learning goals, these will be reviewed in the reviewed syllabus.

There is also consideration of Ofsted feedback regarding Religious Education. It found that where RE was being taught it became a strong part of the children's learning and allowed them to use creativity and imagination. Also, it fostered their ability to want to enquire and have that enquiring mind that will help them with aspects of their life. It also helps children to justify their conclusions, rather than simply expressing personal feelings.

AP explained that this has to be a group vote to convene. If SACRE vote to agree to convene, AP will approach representatives from a primary, secondary, and special school, a primary. There were three dedicated representatives last time. It will be different this year due to Covid-19, and different mechanisms will have to be used in the way meetings are held. AP stated that ideally the syllabus enquiry would be completed over the next year, therefore it can be presented at the September 2021 SACRE.

RW asked if there is any opportunity for members to feed in views to be taken forward to the review, to which AP responded that once the review is opened, members of SACRE and schools will be asked for feedback to ensure that all stakes holders are consulted and there is a broad balance.

RW noted that several members discussed that the agreed syllabus is heavy on methodology and light on content. RW added that this was agreed previously but there was not much progress with it. AP stated that there is a need for the syllabus to be written and supported for non-specialists that are teaching RE, so that they can draw on information from specialists, and there need to be more resources regarding this.

KM stated that from monitoring visits over the past 5 years, the cycle of enquiry has been used as a process across other subject areas, which speaks for its ability for those enquiring minds.

Regarding voting to open the conference:

- Group A – in favour
- Group B – in favour
- Group C – in favour
- Group D – in favour

It is a unanimous decision to open the conference and AP will be in touch regarding any member questions or members wanting to provide any input while the groups are established.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND AOB

AOB: AP highlighted that there has been contact from the British Humanist Society to become a constituted member of SACRE. There was legal advice provided in September 2019 highlighting that there are vacancies in Group A, which leads to challenges on legally establishing a new constituted member. As per the previous meeting, AP has spoken to nearly all the Group A members and concluded that there is not consensus on a Humanist Society representative being formally constituted in to the Southampton SACRE. This information will be presented to council members at a meeting in November 2020. This will then be voted by the council regarding whether they challenge the decision or accept the decision.

AP added that some Group A members felt strongly that it should be a national decision for SACRE rather than at a local level. AP will have the opportunity to highlight this in a DFE discussion as a position of our SACRE if it is agreed by members.

It is noted that the SACRE members welcome the input from Southampton's co-opted Humanist representative, who has contributed and attended many SACRE meetings. EJ stated that although Southampton SACREs Humanists representative will not be a constituted member, the representative is welcome to continue to be a co-opted member.

Cllr T noted that there are Humanists member on some SACRE boards in England as members representing. It may be that there is encouragement for more members to become members of SACRE. AP highlighted that as SACREs are constituted, it is a local decision-making process, therefore each Local Authority makes the decision based on their SACRE. Because Group A is not full, it is an added complication. Legal advice states that if any decision it made without full Group A membership, it may be called in to question.

Next Meeting: Monday 30TH November 2020
4pm – 6pm
Venue: TBC