

WEST SUSSEX STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

At a meeting held on 10th November 2008 at County Hall, Chichester

Present:

Mrs Kim Brown	-	Teacher Representative
Mrs Susanne Carter	-	Headteacher Representative
Mr David Fetteroll	-	Roman Catholic
Dr Mohindar Galowalia	-	Sikh
Mr Malcolm Hawke	-	Teacher Representative
Mrs Saskia Heasman	-	Teacher Representative
Mrs Susan Hibberd	-	Quaker
Mr Derek James	-	Baptist Union
Mrs Rachel Moriarty	-	Church of England
Miss Mo Shilliday	-	Church of England
Mrs Angela Smith	-	Church of England
Mrs Lesley Wilkins	-	Jewish

In attendance:

Nigel Bloodworth	-	General Advisor for Religious Education, WSCC
Craig Bowdery	-	Democratic Services, WSCC

Apologies were received from Mr B Andrews (Buddhist), Mr P Bishop (Methodist), Mrs M Collins (WSCC – Chairman), Mr P Coote (WSCC), Mr D Crow (WSCC), Mr P Griffiths (WSCC), Mr G Parry (Headteacher Representative), Charlie Stewart (WSCC's Director Operations, Learning), Mr J Taylor (Church of England – Vice Chairman) and Mr D Thomas (Teacher Representative).

19. Nigel Bloodworth welcomed members of SACRE to the meeting and explained that due to illness and prior appointments, neither the Chairman nor the Vice Chairman were able to attend the meeting. It was therefore necessary to elect an acting Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

20. Resolved –
That Derek James be elected as Chairman of the SACRE for the duration of the meeting only.

Derek James took the Chair

21. The members requested that their best wishes be conveyed to Mrs Collins, and Nigel Bloodworth undertook to write to her on behalf of the SACRE.

Declarations of interest

22. There were no declarations of interest.

Membership of the SACRE

23. Members noted the change in the clerking arrangements of the SACRE, with Craig Bowdery taking over as the committee clerk responsible for the administrative aspects of the SACRE. Members also welcomed a new member of the SACRE, Dr Mohindar Galowalia, who represented Sikhs. Dr Galowalia introduced himself and informed the members of his work with the Sikh community in Crawley.

Minutes of the last meeting

24. Members highlighted that Mr P Bishop was present at the meeting of the SACRE on 16th June 2008, and that Mr D Crow was a governor at St Andrews Primary School, and not Sackville School.

25. Resolved –
That subject to the inclusion of Mr P Bishop in the list of those present, and the amendment to minute number 1 to correct Mr D Crow's declaration of interest, the minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

26. With reference to minute 10, Nigel Bloodworth informed members that the launch of the West Sussex Agreed Syllabus would now take place in the spring 2009 rather than in October. Members were also informed that the guidelines for school visits described in minute 16 had not yet been developed and that Nigel Bloodworth would ensure that this was done soon.

27. The Chairman invited comments on the recent joint meeting with the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove SACREs. Members expressed the view that the meeting was useful for those who did not work in education, but too vague for those who did. It was noted that it would have been far more useful to have more time available for members of neighbouring SACREs to be able to talk with each other and share experiences and to identify common problems. It was suggested that the three SACREs meet together again, but without a speaker to allow more time for interaction. Nigel Bloodworth explained that there were no plans for another meeting, but that this was certainly a possibility. In the summer of 2009, the SACRE membership would be reconstituted, and this was therefore an opportunity to arrange a meeting to induct new members.

Urgent matters

28. There were none.

Results in public examinations, summer 2008

29. Nigel Bloodworth presented a report (copy appended to the signed minutes) outlining the achievements of students who took Religious Studies (RS) in A level, AS level and GCSE examinations in the summer of 2008. Key points to note included that the numbers of students taking RS at GCSE level had increased slightly to just over 58%, which was just over the national average. In contrast the number of students taking A and AS levels had dropped slightly. Of the 37 secondary schools with year 11 pupils in West Sussex, 35 of them entered students for GCSE examinations, and the two schools that didn't enter students this time around did so last year and plan to again next year. Nigel also explained that the value added information was not available in time to be included in the report, but he undertook to provide it for the following meeting.

30. Members asked why it was that West Sussex was above the national average for A-C grades at A level, but was below the national average for AS levels. Nigel Bloodworth explained that it was difficult to ascertain the precise reasons for such trends, but he speculated that there were more students taking AS levels and that only the more able and committed students were continuing with the A level. David Fetteroll commented that the issue of concern was the number of students who did not continue their AS level into the A level. Mr Fetteroll suggested that more needed to be done to encourage students to take the full A level and that SACRE should investigate the issue. Nigel Bloodworth highlighted that since the AS level was introduced, the numbers of pupils taking the A level had increased, so it appeared that the AS level was serving to encourage take up. Angela Smith reminded members that the course specification for A and AS levels would be changing from this year, and that the GCSE specification would change next year. The courses would become clearer and would feature a different modular structure, but there was a possibility that as a result pupils may have a narrower focus in their studies.

Annual Report 2007/08

31. Nigel Bloodworth presented the draft Annual Report of the West Sussex SACRE for 2007/08 (copy appended to the signed minutes). Nigel explained that the production of the report was one of the statutory requirements of the SACRE. The Annual Report was a summary of the things that the SACRE had discussed over the year and it needed to be published by the end of term in December. Attention was drawn to page 5 of the Report, which included the response to the SACRE's letter to the Secretary of State regarding circular 1/94 and collective worship in schools. The response from the Public Communications Unit stated that there were currently no plans to review circular 1/94 as the DCSF's (Department for Children, Schools and Families) priority was to focus on improving Religious Education. Nigel also asked members whether tables 4 and 5 (regarding the achievements of boys and girls) needed to be included. Members agreed that they were not necessary.

32. Dr Mohindar Galowalia asked for clarification on which religions are taught in schools and how non-Christian faiths are studied. Nigel Bloodworth explained that the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in

West Sussex requires schools to study Christianity at every Key Stage. In primary schools, pupils also do an introduction to Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, and at secondary schools they also study Sikhism and Buddhism. In Crawley, to reflect the local community, the primary schools may study Sikhism although they are not required to do so. Susanne Carter explained that this developed as a result of one Headteacher who promoted the practice, but that this then resulted in other faiths receiving less coverage in the classroom. The Chairman suggested that it would be useful to include the requirements and possibilities regarding the study of non-Christian faiths in the Annual Report, and the SACRE agreed. Full information on the Agreed Syllabus can be found on the West Sussex Grid for Learning website at <http://wsgfl.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/curriculum/religious-education/>.

West Sussex Agreed Syllabus

33. Nigel Bloodworth informed members that the West Sussex Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education was approved in March 2008 and was sent out to schools. Training on the new syllabus was offered to all schools, and around half of them chose to attend. There was a range of support material and the final version of the Agreed Syllabus on the West Sussex Grid for Learning website, although the printed copies of the syllabus were still awaited. The new syllabus appeared to have been welcomed by the schools and was working well.

34. Members asked whether any further training would be provided in the next academic year for the schools that did not attend the initial training session, and were informed that the initial training session served as an introduction to the new syllabus. It would therefore not be beneficial to introduce them to a syllabus that they would already be working with. Future training sessions for schools would be more specific and target particular issues. The formal launch of the Agreed Syllabus would take place during the spring term of 2009 and it was planned to involve the SACRE in the launch.

SACRE self-evaluation

35. Nigel Bloodworth presented a report (copy appended to the signed minutes) on self-evaluation of the West Sussex SACRE. The self-evaluation was to take place during the 2008/9 academic year in order to inform the development of the work plan for 2009/10. To assist this task a table had been developed to assess how the West Sussex SACRE met a range of goals under the headings of the following five main targets:

- 1) Standards and quality of provision of religious education
- 2) Management of the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other key stakeholders
- 3) The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus
- 4) Collective worship
- 5) Contribution of the SACRE to the social and racial harmony agenda

36. Members discussed the progress of the SACRE against the following key areas, and discussed whether the SACRE was 'developing', 'established' or advanced' and whether the suggested level was correct:

- 1a) Compliance and time allocation for RE – suggested level: established/advanced

Members questioned whether the SACRE knew accurately how much time was allocated to RE. Nigel Bloodworth explained that it was difficult to ascertain, especially in primary schools. Data on this issue was collected in 2000/01 and updated the following year but there is no up-to-date information. Members were therefore wary of labelling the SACRE as being advanced in this key area as new data was required. It was therefore agreed that the SACRE was *established*.

- 1b) Public examination entries in RE – suggested level: advanced

Members agreed that the SACRE was well informed on the level of examination entries, but questioned whether there were clear strategies in place to increase numbers. Nigel explained that strategies were in place, but accepted that SACRE might not feel they know about them. It was agreed that Nigel would provide this information and include it in the report on exams produced each autumn term. It was agreed that the SACRE was *advanced*.

- 1c) Standards and achievement – suggested level: established/advanced

The Chairman highlighted that even though it received good information on exam achievements, the SACRE was much better informed when they received OFSTED reports. It was agreed that the Headteacher's Executive should be asked to consider how they could keep SACRE informed on this matter in future. Without this, there was no qualitative data, only quantitative data on exam results. There was therefore very little information relating to key stages 1, 2 or 3 as these pupils were not assessed. Members noted that it seemed that the SACRE's effectiveness was being undermined by the decision by OFSTED to withdraw its reports. It was however explained that the self-evaluation was not being submitted for assessment and was only a tool for the SACRE to judge its own performance. It was therefore agreed that this key area should be divided between key stages 1, 2 and 3 (with the SACRE's level agreed as *developing*) and key stage 4 and above (where the agreed level was *advanced*).

- 1d) Quality of teaching – suggested level: developing

Members agreed that the SACRE was *developing* in this key area, and noted that its limited knowledge arose after the OFSTED reports were withdrawn. Nigel Bloodworth highlighted that whilst the SACRE had limited knowledge, it did not have 'no knowledge' as for example they knew that no complaints had been made.

- 1e) Quality of leadership and management – suggested level: established

Members agreed that the SACRE received some information on the quality of leadership, for example a list of primary school RE coordinators, but not enough and with no analysis. It was therefore agreed that the SACRE was *established* in this key area.

- 1f) Recruitment and retention issues. Level of specialist provision – suggested level: established / advanced

Members agreed that assessment of this key area could only apply to secondary schools as the primary schools did not have specialist RE teachers. It was agreed that the SACRE was *established* in this key area.

- 1g) Resources – suggested level: established

Members agreed that the presence of the specialist RE advisor (Nigel Bloodworth) meant that they received information relating to RE resources in schools. However this was not detailed so the Council agreed that it was *established* in this key area. Members also asked if it was WSCC's policy to retain the specialist RE advisor. Nigel Bloodworth explained that it was WSCC policy to have specialist advisors on all subjects, so there was no reason to believe that the position of specialist RE advisor would not continue.

- 2a) SACRE meetings – suggested level: established

Members agreed that the SACRE meetings could be classified as advanced if they were held in a variety of locations. Nigel Bloodworth explained that in the past the SACRE had agreed that it should meet in County Hall so as to be visible and to foster recognition of its value. It was also highlighted that County Hall was convenient and accessible due to its transport links. Members agreed that the SACRE was *advanced* in this key area, and that Nigel Bloodworth should investigate the possibility of the SACRE being held at venues in the north of the county.

- 2b) Membership and training – suggested level: established

The SACRE agreed that as training was cyclical with the intake of new members every four years, it was *established* in this key area.

37. The Chairman thanked members for their input into the self-evaluation and informed them that the other key areas would be discussed at the next meeting. In the meantime, if members had any additional comments on the self-evaluation table they should forward them to Nigel Bloodworth.

Any other business

38. Nigel Bloodworth informed members that as the SACRE membership would be renewed in the summer of 2009, to tie in with the County Council elections, he would be writing to nominating organisations to ask for their nominations. Members were therefore asked to indicate to their organisations whether or not they would like to continue as a SACRE member.

Date of next meeting

39. Members agreed that the next meeting of the SACRE would take place on Monday 9th March 2009 at 10am in County Hall, Chichester. Members also noted the subsequent dates for future meetings as follows:

- 22nd June 2009
- 9th November 2009
- 8th March 2010

The meeting closed at 11:47am

The Chairman