

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 7 March 2022

PRESENT:

Katie Freeman, in the Chair.
Councillor Mrs Mary Aspinall, Vice Chair
Councillor Jonathan Drean.

Co-opted Representatives: Annmarie Allchurch, Dr Judith Beckman, Claire Linden, Sara Wells, Ed Pawson, Alex Parks, Claire Wills, Nic Gibson.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Margaret Corvid, Dr Catherine Bowness, Councillor Rebecca Smith, Councillor John Mahony.

Also in attendance: Michael House (Education Advisor), Hannah Whiting (Democratic and Member Support Officer), Jason Pincombe (Democratic and Member Support Officer), Macey-Leigh Medlin (Business Support Apprentice L3)

The meeting started at 1.00pm and finished at 2.43pm.

57. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

58. **Minutes**

Minutes agreed from the last meeting on 15 November 2021 by AnnMarie AllChurch, seconded by Councillor Jonathan Drean with adjustment on Page 2 of NUT to NEU.

59. **Chair's Urgent Business**

No urgent business was raised by the Chair.

60. **Interim Annual Report**

Michael Housed has drafted an Interim Report with Chair and Vice Chair. It is late due to operational issues and COVID19, but once approved by Chair and Vice Chair it will be circulated. A further report will be ready for submission in Autumn 2022.

In November 2020, hours for religious education, philosophy and ethics broken down per year group. Nationally, 2928 schools provided information to NASACRE. 20% chose not to report their RE percentages.

Michael House will be following up with several schools because there is either no information given or areas where 0% hours reported. These schools include Lipson Co-

operative Academy, Plymouth High School for Girls, Devonport High School for Boys, Tor Bridge High, Coombe Dean School and Hele's School.

Michael House also reported that 8 of 16 Secondary Schools have decreased their hours per year group for RE, 3 have increased and 5 have no data. Therefore, Michael will be sending a detailed survey to Secondary RE Leads asking about any support they might require and any collective worship that is happening. This will also reiterate the requirements of the agreed syllabus and the details for collective worship.

Michael House went on to discuss that Government does not currently provide GCSE results for RE studies, but they do provide these for the Bachelorette, so the missing details will be asked for in the survey.

Once the surveys have been returned, Michael will report back to SACRE with the results.

Chair thanked Michael for the update and asked if a conversation with Plymouth High School for Girls Headteacher had happened yet. Michael confirmed a letter had been sent as per last meeting and that he is hoping the survey will be a way in to support them.

Chair expressed her concern that the issue with Plymouth High School for Girls has been ongoing for 18 months with RE time being used to get students to and from PE, and feels further action is needed as phone calls have been made and letters sent, and was concerned the school was being given too much space.

Michael House agreed it needs to be escalated further but suggested that as the survey would be going out shortly, it would be good to follow that.

Councillor Mary Aspinall agreed with the Chair and said it needed to be raised to the Regional Schools Commissioner. Councillor Jonathan Dreaan agreed and explained his concerns about other schools thinking they can get away with the same if no action is taken with Plymouth High School for Girls.

Ed Pawson agreed but explained that the Regional School Commissioner might not be the correct authority, and would it be the Department for Education. Michael House agreed and explained it would be the Education Standards Fund because it links the Department of Education with Academy Schools.

Ed Pawson explained that he had been involved in sending a letter to an Academy Trust, who have secondary schools in Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth and they are trying to cut their RE time but it is not in black and white yet so it is hard to pinpoint. He asked if Michael House was following up on this also, and Michael explained that he was not aware of this, but would follow up after the meeting.

Councillor Mary Aspinall asked if the survey could show what schools are providing now as well as what they plan on providing from September 2022. Ed Pawson agreed, adding that schools mustn't get the impression that RE is fair game to cut.

Michael House explained that whilst it is the role of SACRE to guide, inform and challenge, the different relationships themselves are challenging.

Chair warned that as the deadline for providing an Annual Report was not met, the SACRE would receive a letter as the Annual Report is a legal requirement. Chair offered her support on the Interim report.

Councillor Mary Aspinall asked for a vote from SACRE members asking that once Chair and Vice Chair have seen and agreed the Annual Report with Michael House, that it could be sent, rather than waiting until the next SACRE meeting to agree it. Members voted unanimously in favour.

Michael House added that with regards to budget, that when conferences and training is offered to members, within reason, members can be funded to attend.

61. **Collective Worship 'Time to Breathe'**

Ed Pawson explained that there was a working group that met about 2 ½ years ago to provide a clearer document on collective worship and policy. Collective worship is to be done daily, this hasn't change in 25 years and the aim of the working group was to make it less onerous and provide more guidance on what this could look like for schools as a tool and to provide a name that was more inclusive and open to all. "Time to Breathe" seemed like a more open offer to children so that even if they do not have strong religious connections themselves, it is still time for spiritual development, of students coming together, with invitational prayer.

Claire Milford added that she was impressed by the wording and that it has proven to be much more inclusive for children with complex learning difficulties, who, for the most part, do not have a concept of God. Claire went on to explained that they use Time to Breathe as a space to celebrate each other and their achievements with an opportunity to pray at the end and this has been happening online throughout the COVID19 pandemic.

Councillor Mary Aspinall asked if Michael House could re-share the document with members.

Chair asked if the working party would reform, which Ed Pawson agreed would be a good idea it has moved on a lot since its publication and there are new databases and access to resources, which could be revisited.

Chair and Councillor Mary Aspinall asked if it was worth resending to schools and Michael House explained he would be sending out the 2020 version with the survey, mentioned previously.

Chair asked Claire Milford if she had capacity to be part of a working group to review, and Claire hoped she would. Chair asked Ed Pawson to contact Devon and Torbay's SACRE to see if they would want to join in revisiting. Michael House suggested this could form part of a SACRE development plan.

62. **School Workforce Data 'Support Plymouth Schools'**

This item was covered in discussions for item 60.

63. **Welcome to New and Returning Members**

Chair welcomed Claire Wills and Alex Parks.

Chair updated the group that a new Buddhist representative hopes to join at the next meeting. The Greek Orthodox Church and Humanist UK have both been contacted for representation. Chair is looking into finding a teacher with NATRE Membership to join and a Hindu representative.

Michael House explained that there has been an expectation on the Chair and Vice Chair to rotate through the houses, but there was an action to look at the constitution to change this and no comments have been received. The constitution changes will be revisited when there is higher representation.

Sara Wells explained that they have struggled to find a Hindu representative at the Plymouth Centre for Culture and Diversity, but have a speaker who does work on Teams and Zoom, and if SACRE meetings were to remain hybrid, she might be able to attend. The representative does not live in Plymouth but has a long standing connection with the city. Michael House agreed to speak to Sara after the meeting about this as a possibility.

64. **Local and National Developments**

Chair explained that the key note speaker sessions from the SW SACRE Conference are available online.

NATRE held a curriculum symposium and at the SW SACRE conference and the Chair was to talk about the curriculum symposium, explaining that the syllabus at the moment is great as it can be approached with a world view.

Chair also explained that schools seem to this that an Ofsted Research Review won't happen in the South West, but more are happening and schools need to be engaging and taking ownership of their units. We have key note speakers.

Michael House explained that within Ofsted reports, since Sept 2021, there have been 2 schools referred to favourably regarding their RE in Plymouth and 1 school with R.E. being an area of development.

Chair asked that Michael House send a supportive letter on behalf of Plymouth SACRE to the school needing development to show them the resources they can access.

Councillor Mary Aspinall asked that if an event was put on to revitalise Time to Breathe, with Plymouth SACRE taking the lead, this would get schools talking about RE and push them to do better and Michael House suggested this could also be added to a development plan. However, Ed Pawson did highlight the need to not confuse collective worship with RE. Chair suggested that if an event was put on, it could be done with a half day focus on each.

Chair explained that the Hub for Plymouth is still meeting remotely and attendees seem to like that format, but a pattern is being looked into for future meetings to allow for some more hands on activities. The next meeting is on 24 March 2022, contact Chair for details.

65. **World Views**

AnnMarie All Church explained that a member of staff at her school attended a hub session and it made them think about World Views and how important it is to talk to children about world views. It is a Church of England School, but there are children who say they do not believe in God and that they do not want to be involved in Collective worship or RE lessons, but everyone has a world view based on their interactions with people and experiences in the world. Everyone believes in something. The Learn Teach Lead Conference and our RE lead came back enthused and excited around a video clip 'Nobody Stands Nowhere'. All staff watched it in a meeting and it was decided the school would host a World Views Day across the school that would start with that video and pupils would spend the whole day responding to that video and talking about their experiences of the world. The work created on that day was used to make a display in the hall. AnnMarie AllChurch then showed some examples. AnnMarie explained that children spent a lot of time talking about how similar they are and how different they are but that it doesn't matter, it is not a barrier. The day promoted acceptance, understanding and tolerance of one another.

The group all complimented the school on their work and how lovely it was to see the hubs work in action.

66. **Plymouth Centre for Faith and Cultural Diversity**

Sara Wells explained that with schools being closed and doing online learning, a lot of the centre's work was not taking place between March 2020 and October 2021 due to COVID19. They offered online sessions from Autumn 2020 and have recently been able to restart face to face sessions again but are offering online alongside.

The centre has worked with 60 schools from March 2020 to present and had 279 bookings and 371 hours of speaker time in schools over this period, 127 hours were online. The centre will be offering planning meetings to schools at the start of the new financial year and get schools back online with planned sessions of lessons.

New financial year brings a new subscription period and the centre is encouraging schools to apply for resubscription. They have also been actively looking for new funding schemes, but if any members know of any others they can look into, please let them know as the COVID19 pandemic has hit them hard as a small charity.

Schools were asked for what they were looking for from the centre and predominantly schools are looking for interactive workshops.

Chair recommended looking at applying for funding for specific events such as the Holocaust Memorial materials.

AnnMarie AllChurch and the Chair reiterated how important the Centre is and how valuable their visits are.

67. **SACRE Chair Nominations & Membership**

As mentioned previously, Michael House explained that there is an expectation that the Chair and Vice Chair rotate between the groups and it is in the constitution. Our current

Chair is Group B and our previous Chair was group C. Chair did explain they would welcome all groups to put forward names for people they feel would be good as chairs.

Ed Pawson explained that Devon and Torbay SACRE's reviewed their constitutions and removed the need for a rotation of groups, it made finding a chair far easier.

Michael House explained that the NASACRE Chair guidance was included with the agenda and it gives a good idea of what is expected for the role. There are some developments coming with Plymouth SACRE, one being employing a specific RE advisor, to work alongside Michael and provide support to Chair and Vice Chair.

Chair invited anyone interested in putting themselves forward as Chair to email the SACRE Mailbox.

Michael House thanked Chair and Vice Chair, Councillor Mary Aspinall for their steer through a very challenging period with changes in support for SACRE from PCC as well as COVID19.

68. **Updates from Members**

Michael House explained he had a box of syllabus folders available, which Sara Wells explained PCFCD would like.

Hannah Whiting to speak to Democratic Support about possibility of the next meeting, the AGM, being hybrid and whether votes could be cast online and/or in breakout rooms.

Hannah Whiting to liaise with AnnMarie AllChurch on display of pupils work at the next Full Council Meeting.

69. **AOB**

There were no items of any other business raised.

70. **Date and venue of next meeting**

AGM - IPM Monday 27 June 2022, Warspite Room, Council House.