



Democratic and Member Support

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STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Monday 14 November 2016

1.30 pm

St Matthews's Primary and Nursery Academy, 1 Peregrine Road, Derriford, Plymouth, PL6 5FN

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

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Tracey Lee
Chief Executive

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

PART I

Agenda

1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

SACRE will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair for the forthcoming year from Groups A and C.

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for non-attendance submitted by SACRE Members.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members will be asked to make any declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2016.

5. Chair's Urgent Business

To receive reports on business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

6. Membership update

The RE Adviser/Democratic Support Officer will provide a membership update.

7. Annual report and Religious Studies examination results

Members will be provided with details of the annual report and Plymouth's Religious Studies examination results.

8. Senior Education Adviser

Heather Ogburn (Senior Education Adviser for Plymouth schools) will discuss aspects of her work which relate to RE – including diversity, Prevent agenda, resilience and wellbeing.

9. Understanding Christianity - a resource for schools (Pages 7 - 10)

Katie Freeman will discuss the briefing paper 'Understanding Christianity for Church of England representatives on a SACRE'.

10. National and local news and developments

(Pages 11 - 12)

- The future of RE – RE Commission (MarkAndrew Dearden)
- The LTL Conference, Plymouth RE Hub and other developments (Katie Freeman)
- RE/SACRE news to schools – including grants/training (RE Adviser)
- Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) plans (RE Adviser/all members)

11. Plymouth Centre for Faiths and cultural Diversity (PCFCD) news/developments

The RE Adviser will provide members with news and developments from the PCFCD.

12. Date and venue of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at on Monday 27 March 2017, time and venue yet to be decided.

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Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Thursday 14 July 2016

PRESENT:

MarkAndrew Dearden, in the Chair.

Councillor Morris.

Catherine Bowness, Alison Bradley, Katie Freeman, Liz Hill, Anna Kelly, Shilpa Kulkarni and Helena Mitchell.

Co-opted Representatives: Ben Kerr, Mark Mesley and Margaret Thompson.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Mrs Aspinall and Drean.

Penny Burnside, Gordon Cryer, Martin Edmonds, Gwen Hughes, Ian Kavanagh, Astra Parkin and Alison Sturgeon.

Also in attendance: Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) and Lynn Young (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 2.07 pm and finished at 4.26 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors in accordance with the code of conduct.

2. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2016 are confirmed as a correct record.

3. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

4. **MEMBERSHIP ISSUES**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided an update on the current membership.

Members were advised that –

(a) four new members had been appointed –

- Shilpa Kulkarni – Hindu Community representative

- Astra Parkin – Baptist Church representative
 - Margaret Thompson – Quaker Community representative
 - Mark Mesley – Greek Orthodox Community representative
- (b) Katie Freeman agreed to contact the new headteacher of All Saints Academy Plymouth (Gary Fatcher) to ask for his assistance in finding a new PASH representative;
- (c) Mark Mesley agreed to assist in finding a new Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth representative;
- (d) Councillor Morris agreed to contact the party whips regarding the Councillor vacancies;
- (d) vacancies existed for several teaching union representatives and a Special Schools representative;
- (e) it was agreed to investigate the possibility of having a Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD) representative.

5. RE DEVELOPMENTS - THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL PICTURE

Feedback from the NASACRE AGM

The Chair provided Members with an update following his attendance at the recent NASACRE AGM in London. Members were advised that –

- (a) the two keynote speakers at the event were –
- The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE
 - Professor Adam Dinham
- (b) not enough SACREs were present to vote on any major constitutional changes;
- (c) a number of issues were discussed (including the marginalisation of RE);
- (d) digital audio files of some of the discussions, along with a PDF of Professor Dinham's presentation were available on the NASACRE website [here](#);
- (e) RE is the only subject that is not part of the National Curriculum and is locally determined through the Local Authority's SACRE duty.

Plymouth RE Conference, LTLRE and the RE Hub

Katie Freeman, Primary Hub Leader, provided members with details of the recent Plymouth RE Conference, along with an update on recent activity within the Plymouth Hub and the LTLRE project. Members were advised that -

- (a) the second Plymouth RE Conference had recently been held. The event was

well attended by delegates from across Devon and Cornwall, along with members of the Red Cross. Other attendees included the main speaker, Lat Blaylock (editor of *RE Today*) and a representative from the Plymouth Centre of Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD);

- (b) Katie had recently attended LTLRE conferences in Bedfordshire and Birmingham;
- (c) funding had been secured to expand LTLRE into a region of the north of England;
- (d) Katie was currently supporting five schools through the RE Quality Mark (REQM) award scheme;
- (e) there had recently been a debate in the House of Commons on the issue of parental right of withdrawal [of their child/ren from RE] which had been well supported by MPS;
- (f) Katie had written an article for the TES (*Times Educational Supplement*) which was due to be published over the summer;
- (g) funding for LTLRE was in place for the remainder of this academic year and for the next conference, however the funding situation after this point was unknown. The honorarium, previously paid to Hub Leaders was no longer available;

Following a discussion regarding funding for the LTLRE, the following suggestions were made –

- SACRE to ask for continuation of funding for LTLRE
 - to seek assistance in applying for a grant
 - to contact NASACRE for assistance
 - to use Crowdfunding
- (h) Katie had recently undertaken training entitled ‘*Understanding Christianity*’ (written by *RE Today* team) and was provided with some outstanding resources which she shared with members. She considered this training would be particularly beneficial for non-specialist teachers.

Katie Freeman received a vote of thanks from SACRE members for all the hard work she has undertaken for RE and SACRE.

Non-religious worldviews and the RE curriculum

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, discussed the recent High Court ruling on Religious Education/Religious Studies examinations. This was an important legal case which attempted to clarify the law on RE. It made clear that humanism should be studied but rejected the notion, promoted by the British Humanist Society, that all examination syllabuses should include humanism. It was recommended that

members look on the NASACRE website for further clarification and information on this important issue.

The Chair reminded members that part of the role of SACRE was to ensure all aspects of the syllabus were covered and it was important to monitor future developments, both locally and nationally.

Under this agenda item, Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that the Religious Education Council of England and Wales had recently launched a Commission on Religious Education 'to review the legal, education, and policy frameworks for religious education (RE). This review will be a wide-ranging, inclusive and evidence-based process designed to inform policy makers. The ultimate aim will be to improve the quality and rigor of religious education and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain'.

6. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND FUTURE PROJECTS**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update on the Development Plan and future projects. Members were advised that –

- (a) the SACRE annual budget of £6,000 [from Plymouth City Council] was used to support training, curriculum projects and ongoing events (such as conferences, travel costs, Holocaust Memorial Day);
- (b) Plymouth schools had recently been sent details of a scheme to secure a SACRE grant to use on an innovative scheme of work. Links to Mayflower 400 were particularly encouraged. The RE Adviser will send this information again to schools in September;
- (c) collective worship was an issue which was not being addressed. Following a lengthy discussion, Jonathan advised that he would provide some ways forward on this issue in the near future and set up a small working party to explore useful guidelines for schools, especially around the use of appropriate language and use of resources;
- (d) two local primary schools, Plaistow Hill Infant and Nursery School and Pilgrim Primary School, had successfully been awarded a SACRE grant for the sum of £250 to carry out some innovative RE work and generally boost their RE.

Agreed that Jonathan Marshall would circulate the reports from the two schools to members.

(Anna Kelly left part way through this agenda item)

7. **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that –

- (a) SACRE had supported Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) in Plymouth since 2001;

- (b) a HMD event had not been held in the city centre this year due to capacity issues;
- (c) Jonathan would contact Councillor Downie (Cabinet member for Safer and Stronger Communities) to discuss how HMD could be supported in the future;
- (d) the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust had recently appointed a new South West Regional Support Worker (Elizabeth George).

(Councillor Morris left the meeting after this agenda item)

8. **THE 'PREVENT' DUTY, BRITISH VALUES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE - RE'S CONTRIBUTION**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, drew attention to his paper on this topic, on our SACRE website. He advised members that Heather Ogburn (Senior Leadership Adviser) had been providing training on this issue to schools, in particular working with Year 5 and 6 pupils. It would be useful to invite Heather to the next meeting in order that she could provide members with a summary of the work she has carried out on this issue.

9. **PLYMOUTH CENTRE FOR FAITHS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY (PCFCD) - NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update on news and developments from the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD). Members were advised that –

- (a) Jonathan would investigate the likelihood of having a member of the PCFCD as a member of SACRE;
- (b) the PCFCD had evolved and increased the services it offered to schools;
- (c) the following visits to PCFCD had been undertaken –
 - 2014-15 – 233
 - 2015-16 – 522
 - 2016-17 – 277 (thus far)
- (d) 67 Plymouth schools now subscribed to PCFCD, and 120 schools and organisations had used the centre in the past year;
- (e) PCFCD required additional funding, and needed to find alternative premises by the end of September - a venue which preferably consisted of two large classrooms, a toilet and kitchen facilities. There was the possibility of being re-located to St Matthew's Primary and Nursery Academy (on a temporary basis) or Marjon.

Under this agenda item, Ben Kerr queried the membership allocation of SACRE, and asked whether the meetings could start at a later time.

Jonathan Marshall agreed that the membership of SACRE, although a regular item, needed to be kept on future agendas so as to ensure the widest help and support for SACRE's work.

10. **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting, possibly including some time for more lengthy discussion, was confirmed as Monday 14 November in the Council House, time to be confirmed.



Understanding Christianity for Church of England representatives on a SACRE

The purpose of this briefing is to provide diocesan representatives on a SACRE, or on any other RE group, with additional information to be able to respond to any concerns about Understanding Christianity.

Understanding Christianity: Background

There has been a need identified in RE (by successive Ofsted reports) for support to enable the progressive and systematic investigation of Christian beliefs and practices. A number of funders, together with the Church of England, agreed that there was a need to create a more intellectually coherent and challenging approach for teaching about Christianity as part of a wider RE curriculum, and for a resource that could contribute to raising the level of pupils' religious literacy. RE Today, an organisation without denominational affiliation, and with a widely acknowledged track record of producing high quality RE resources, was commissioned to prepare the material. Understanding Christianity offers that clear, coherent approach to teaching and learning about Christianity in RE for 4-14 year olds. It is based around a selection of core Christian concepts and structured across the age range to support pupils in deepening their understanding.

The launch of Understanding Christianity has been a great success. The resource has been positively received by Diocesan Directors of Education, diocesan advisers and, most importantly, by teachers. To date 62 Diocesan RE advisers and several independent RE advisers have been trained as accredited trainers by RE Today. Each of our dioceses has engaged in the project by sending at least one adviser to be trained and they are now rolling the training out across 38 dioceses to our 4700 schools. This training will be focused on church schools but is open to community schools. The project was extensively trialled in both community and church schools, and significant changes were made as a result.

The initial reaction from diocesan officers/trainers has been very positive. The first training sessions for teachers are being held this term (Autumn 2016) so it is too soon to provide quantitative data. However, the 'digital noise' around the project is enthusiastic and anecdotal feedback is very positive. Over 1,000 packs of the resource have now been shipped from the warehouse in the first fortnight of the roll out to schools.

www.churchofengland.org/education

The National Society (Church of England and Church in Wales) for Promoting Education – operating as The Church of England Education Office

Church House Great Smith Street London SW1P 3AZ
T: 020 7898 1000 Charity No: 313070

Understanding Christianity has stimulated a heated debate about curriculum development in RE. This positive development forces all sides to sharpen and think through what a balanced RE curriculum should look like. We now have an informed debate taking place about religious literacy, and in particular in relation to this project, theological literacy. While we would not claim that this is entirely as a result of Understanding Christianity, the resource has certainly acted as a catalyst to the debate.

Frequently asked questions

Is Understanding Christianity a complete RE curriculum?

Understanding Christianity is a **resource not a curriculum**. Any school (church or community) just teaching Understanding Christianity would be failing to provide a balanced curriculum. As a resource it is expected that teachers will use their professional judgement in selecting and adapting activities to suit their context.

Is Understanding Christianity funded solely by the Church of England?

Understanding Christianity is a resource funded by Culham St Gabriel's, the Jerusalem Trust and the Sir Halley Stewart Trust.

Was Understanding Christianity written solely by Christians?

It was commissioned and managed by the Church of England Education Office but written by RE Today and its team of multi faith and non-faith RE advisers.

Should Understanding Christianity be recommended for use in a locally agreed syllabus?

It is entirely a matter for any SACRE if it decides to recommend or discourage a particular resource for use with its syllabus, but the same criteria and approach should be used fairly to assess which resources should be recommended to support RE.

Is Understanding Christianity inconsistent with the REC Code of Practice for RE teachers?

The Code of Practice is about teacher practice and behaviour not about resources and curriculum. It should be noted, however, that the Church of England is a signatory to the Code of Practice and would not support a resource that was inconsistent with it.

The Code of Practice can be found here

<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/educators/projects/a-practice-code-for-teachers-of-re>

The teaching approach of Understanding Christianity is wholly consistent with the Code. The Code of Practice encourages teachers to 'respect people's beliefs'; it 'encourages and values reason-giving'. It 'treats others as they would wish to be treated'; it 'accepts contestability and is self-aware'; it is open; it 'promotes a fair and accurate representation of the belief under study'; 'is balanced'; and is 'open to debate and hard questions and deals with controversial issues' about Christianity e.g.: 'Creation and science; conflicting or complementary?' at Upper KS2

Can students of RE participate in thinking theologically or is this exclusive to members of a religious community?

This question assumes a narrow definition of theology and one that would not be recognised as reflecting the scope of theology as understood in many British universities today. The nature of the RE curriculum is being widely debated at the moment and this view is only one of many views in this debate.

see <http://www.reonline.org.uk/news/revision-rethinking-re-a-conversation-about-religious-and-theological-literacy/>

Does Understanding Christianity allow for the diversity of views in Christianity?

What is being explored in Understanding Christianity are the key concepts that build up the prevailing Christian narrative as understood in most Anglican/non-conformist churches. There is, however, considerable scope to bring in other Christian viewpoints. For example, the KS3 unit on Incarnation available on the website <http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk/teachers-and-schools/resources/> also explores a range of denominational approaches to worship from Quaker to Pentecostal and in the 'Digging Deeper' section explores Jesus as represented in art. 'Body Theology' including the views of the Lesbian and Gay Christian movement is covered, and the unit includes the recommendation that 'students' 'should explore non-religious views and weigh up how far they might also support the idea of human dignity and value'.

Does Understanding Christianity undermine a core ideal of religious literacy i.e. the impartial study of religion and belief?

Understanding Christianity was written by a team of multi faith and non-faith RE experts from RE Today. It was not written from the perspective of faith, but rather the resource offers an impartial look at Christianity through the exploration of the core theological concepts of the Christian faith.

'This the best resource we have ever seen for teaching RE' (Board of governors at a London primary school)

'Fired up and enthused teachers ready to get stuck into Understanding Christianity'
(Senior Lecturer in Teacher Development)

'121 schools signed up for Understanding Christianity' (Adviser St Albans Diocese)

'Over 70 Schools now signed up' (Adviser, Norwich Diocese)

Derek Holloway
Church School Character and SIAMS Development Manager
October 2016

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Religious Education News
from Plymouth Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
(SACRE)

October 2016

To all Leaders and Heads of RE in Plymouth schools using the Plymouth Agreed Syllabus

Dear all

This is a short update and reminder of the resources and sources of support available to you in your important work as a Leader/Head of RE. We know these are very challenging times to be a child and young person so what we provide in RE can make a major contribution in preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, whilst enabling them to develop Spiritually, Morally, Socially and Culturally. (Key aspects of the two aims of the National Curriculum)

A **SHAP wall chart of Religious Festivals** for 2016/2017 was sent out to all Plymouth schools, week beginning 10th October, with the “key” to access further information. If you did not receive this please contact Jonathan Marshall on the Email address below.

Please note these resources are purchased from SHAP by SACRE for use in your school and should not be distributed beyond, as this would undermine the future work of SHAP.

The Plymouth **SACRE and RE website** contains some key documents like the current RE syllabus guidance and SACRE reports on its work. There are also links to other important RE sites and resources. Useful for teachers as well as members of the public.

www.plymouth.gov.uk/schoolroom

Our **Plymouth RE hub**, originally established through the Learn Teach Lead RE project, continues to meet each term (six times a year) and goes from strength to strength under the leadership of Katie Freeman. We hope that a local Secondary school teacher will soon join Katie to share the role. This is a really lively group which provides practical help, resources, inspiration, support and fun. Oh yes, and cake! For information contact Katie at:

katiefreeman@blueyonder.co.uk

The annual **Learn Teach Lead RE** conference will be held later this month at St. Mellion, from late afternoon Thursday 20th October through Friday 21st October. This will provide another fantastic opportunity to extend learning and be inspired by national speakers and fellow RE teachers! This year's theme is: *'MAKING RE WORK' – VALUES, DEPTH AND ENQUIRY*

For information and further details see the website www.ltIRE.org

Plymouth SACRE has funding grants of £250 each to support the development of RE in your school. Projects must address and illustrate an aspect of the approach highlighted in our Plymouth RE syllabus, “Engaging with Religion and Worldviews” 2014, which states that...

“In particular, we want to emphasise the importance of our unique, local Plymouth story through focused learning and enquiry on; Heritage, Diversity and Spirituality.”

References and connections to the *Mayflower 400* event would be particularly welcome.

A project should create good quality, active learning experiences and resources that will inspire and deepen understanding.

If you are interested and would like to apply contact me for further information:

jonathan.marshallRE@hotmail.com

The Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity is looking for new premises due to the expansion of Salisbury Road School. There are some promising leads so we hope the situation will soon be successfully resolved. The work in schools has grown enormously over the past two years and approximately 500 visits, from Faith Speakers or to places of worship are now completed each year! Nationally, this is a unique service of support which enables children to grow in their understanding and appreciation of the place of religion and belief in people’s lives.

For information about the Centre and its services Email: info@pcfcd.co.uk

Following SACRE’s successful “Teaching Islam” sessions in February, plans are underway to provide another series, this time on “**Teaching Judaism**” details to follow.

A reminder that the 27th January each year is **Holocaust Memorial Day**. I know many of you already plan for this in RE work and contribute to collective worship and assemblies. HMD reminds us of the important links with hate crime and preventing violent extremism. It reminds us too of our work around British Values and our role in helping our children and young people develop resilience, which is closely related to spiritual development. (There is a short paper about this on the SACRE/RE website)

These are very challenging times to be a teacher too! On behalf of Plymouth SACRE, thank you for all you are doing to help promote a deeper understanding of the role and importance of RE in your school. With the information above, we hope you know there is support for you but please do contact me if you feel SACRE can do anything further to help.

Best wishes

Jonathan Marshall MBE RE Adviser, Plymouth SACRE

jonathan.marshallRE@hotmail.com