

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 27 March 2017

PRESENT:

Martin Edmonds, in the Chair.

Helena Mitchell, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Ball and Drear.

Bakari Arabi, Catherine Bowness, Penny Burnside, Katie Freeman, Gary Fatcher, Liz Hill, Anna Kelly and Alison Williams.

Co-opted Representatives: Ben Kerr and Margaret Thompson

Apologies for absence: MarkAndrew Dearden, Jon Goulder, David Lundie, Councillor Morris and Astra Parkin.

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

The meeting started at 1.35 pm and finished at 3.52 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.

22. Declarations of Interest

The following declaration of interest was made in accordance with the code of conduct –

Name	Minute Number and Item	Reason	Interest
Councillor Mrs Aspinall	28 – The Big NASACRE survey	School Governor and member of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT	Personal

23. Minutes

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2016.

24. Chair's Urgent Business

The Chair advised members that an investigation into Councillor Morris was ongoing and it was not appropriate to make any further comment at this present time.

25. Welcome to new Members

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

Members were advised that –

- (a) Mariella Paganuzzi is the new Special Schools representative;
- (b) Dr David Lundie is the new Roman Catholic representative.

26. **Membership Issues**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser), advised members that Shilpa Kulkarni (Hindu Community representative) and Ian Kavanagh (Buddhist Community representative) had resigned from SACRE, and they had been asked to find replacements.

Jonathan Marshall expressed his concern at the lack of Teaching Union representatives on SACRE and it was agreed that Katie Freeman would endeavour to find new Teaching Union representatives.

27. **SACRE Annual Report**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, discussed the SACRE annual report.

Following a discussion, it was queried whether the word ‘faith’ could be replaced with the word ‘belief’. Jonathan Marshall advised that it could be difficult to implement this change, however he advised he would investigate whether this was possible.

Agreed that the SACRE Annual Report 2015 – 2016 is approved.

28. **The Big NASACRE Survey**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) provided members with information on The Big NASACRE Survey which had recently been launched. A major review is ongoing, through the Religious Education Council though independent of it – the Commission on RE (CoRE). The Casey Review (Dame Louise Casey DBE CB) was also completed recently and has some interesting findings and recommendations around opportunities and integration which touch on RE.

The deadline for completion of The Big NASACRE Survey was 30 April, and SACREs were being encouraged to complete this for the following reason -

In order for NASACRE to be able to represent the views of its member SACREs at a national level, including to the REC and other policymakers, it is important that we try to develop as full an understanding of the views of our members as possible. This is the reason for this quite lengthy research survey being conducted by the NASACRE Chair, Paul Smalley who is also a Senior Lecturer in RE at Edge Hill University. Data from this will be anonymised before being discussed with the NASACRE Executive and being used to inform policymakers about the strengths, views and hopes of SACREs across the country. It is also hoped that the results of this research will be published more widely in suitable journals to inform the wider RE community.

Jonathan Marshall advised members that a number of questions needed to be answered, including questions relating to the Agreed Syllabus –

- what are the strengths?

- what are the weaknesses?
- do we want to move towards a national syllabus?

Following a discussion, members raised the following points –

- (a) the role of SACRE is to inform schools what should be taught in RE lessons;
- (b) a number of schools struggled to find time to teach RE in their curriculum;
- (c) RE is not part of the National Curriculum but should it be?;
- (d) RE is the only subject that Local Authorities are responsible for;
- (e) the local RE curriculum was very popular in Plymouth;
- (f) RE had not previously been a priority for Ofsted Inspectors, however there was now a new HMI who was encouraging the inspection of RE.

Agreed that Jonathan Marshall would e-mail members to arrange a meeting to discuss the completion of The Big NASACRE Survey.

Order of business

With the permission of the Chair, the order of business was amended as set out below in the minutes.

29. Monitoring RE provision in Plymouth schools

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) stressed the importance of engaging with local schools. He had been advised by the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD) that a number of Plymouth schools (approximately 10 – 15) did not engage with them. Three Plymouth secondary schools did not enter their students for GCSE RE, and it was important to understand the reasons for this. It was essential to ensure that teachers did not get complacent or feel unsupported when teaching RE.

30. What is Religious Literacy and how well do Secondary School teachers know the 6 major world religions? What are the implications for SACREs and for the support and training of all teachers of Religious Education?

Alison Bradley had until recently, been a member of Plymouth SACRE. She had now re-located to Liverpool to undertake a Masters Degree. She gave a presentation entitled 'What is Religious Literacy and how well do Secondary School teachers know the six major world religions? What are the implications for SACREs and for the support and training of all teachers of Religious Education?'

The presentation was well received by members, had been thought-provoking and had generated a lively debate.

The Chair thanked Alison Bradley for her presentation.

31. **Holocaust Memorial Day**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) provided members with an update on Holocaust Memorial Day 2017.

Members were advised that –

- (a) Solly Irving had been unable to make his annual visit to Plymouth this year due to ill health;
- (b) Martin Edmonds (Chair) had organised a successful and well-attended event for Holocaust Memorial Day at Plympton Academy, where a number of Plymouth schools had received a cherry tree to plant at their school so as to be able to commemorate the event in the future;
- (c) a civic event was held every year at Mount Eggcumbe House and Country Park to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. The RE Adviser expressed the hope that future events would be held at the Anne Frank Memorial on Plymouth Hoe in order to make the event more accessible to the general public.

(Alison Bradley left the meeting after this agenda item)

32. **National and Local RE news and issues**

LearnTeachLeadRE(LTLRE) and RE Hub

Katie Freeman advised members that LTLRE was set up five years ago by the Exeter Diocese, to work with faith and community schools, and secondary and primary leads across the peninsula to train staff. In the last two years LTLRE has grown, and funding has been granted for extra areas around the country. Various training sessions have been held in Plymouth, and extra Hub meetings held. The quality of the training enables teachers to lead their own training sessions.

The Plymouth Schools RE Conference is being held on 12 May, and Lat Blaylock will be attending this event together with Deborah Weston.

A selection of books on 'Understanding Christianity' were held by Katie Freeman for members to view.

A series of three 'Teaching Judaism' sessions were held recently at Plymouth Synagogue and were a great success.

Assessment Working Group

Katie Freeman had visited Exeter with two members of the RE Hub to work with teachers from Torbay and Devon, to create overview grids to assess how children are working. Members were advised that a number of schools were now using this method.

Collective Worship Working Group

SACRE funding was available to write booklets on this important issue. A working party was already in place for this and two questionnaires have already been sent to schools. It was proposed that Plymouth SACRE (with Jonathan Marshall) provide guidance on Collective Worship. It is important to support what is going on in the city and showcase it and share knowledge with as many schools as possible. Collective Worship is not happening in all schools – in some schools it happens sometimes. It was hoped that by July a package of support was available that could be shared with Plymouth schools.

SACRE RE grants

Two grants have been awarded so far this year – to The Cathedral School of St Mary and MAP2. Jonathan Marshall would like to promote this scheme and ensure it is well publicised. He will ensure that paper copies of this scheme are circulated to Plymouth schools.

SW SACRE Conference

Helena Mitchell attended the conference which was held at Dillington House. Dr Joyce Miller, a Commissioner for the RE Council provided a keynote address. A number of workshops were held –

- The importance of bringing humanism to life with confidence in the school curriculum - Liz Payne-Ahmadi
- ‘Crossing the Bridges’ - A project from Poole SACRE aimed at engaging more fully with local faith communities - David Rees
- Introduction to the Understanding Cone on Humanism, local faith communities - Pauline Dodds
- Workshop on ‘godly play’ led by a TA of small school in Gloucestershire.

NASACRE AGM

The NASACRE AGM 2017 is being held in York on 16 May 2017, any member who is able to attend is requested to advise the Democratic Support Officer of their availability.

33. Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) provided members with an update on the latest news and developments from the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD).

Members were advised that –

- (a) a PCFCD co-opted representative would soon be appointed to SACRE;
- (b) approximately 500 visits were arranged by PCFCD each year;
- (c) the Centre had now re-located to the old ROSLA (Raising of School Leaving Age) building on the University Technical College (UTC) campus in Devonport;

- (d) a number of faith speakers had withdrawn their services to the Centre so the Centre is urgently seeking replacements;
- (e) the Plymouth Council of Faiths are holding an event on Thursday 13 July in the Upper Guildhall. SACRE would have a stand at the event. More information would be circulated to members nearer the time.

The Chair thanked Jonathan Marshall for his report.

(Ben Kerr left the meeting after this agenda item)

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

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 10 July, to be held at Marjon. Further details would follow.