

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 20 March 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor Mary Aspinall (Acting Chair), Cllr Jonathan Drean (Deputy Chair), Cllr Tina Touhy, Cllr Sally Cresswell

Dr Judith Beckman, Ben Kerr, Lesley Clark, Ed Pawson, Annmarie Allchurch, Sara Wells, Claire Wills, Professor David Salter, David Evans

Also in attendance: Jim Barnicott (Head of Education and Virtual School), Michael House (Local Authority Officer to SACRE), Asif Siddique (Democratic and Member Support Officer).

1. Apologies

Cllr Chip Tofan, Cllr John Mahony, Katie Freeman, Claire Linden, Dr Catherine Bowness, Nic Gibson, Father David Bailey, Gwen Hughes, Alex Parks, Emma Butler

The meeting started at 1.30pm and finished at 3.00pm.

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.

2. Welcome to New Members – Deputy Chair (Cllr Jonathan Drean)

Chair welcomed all members

3. Declarations of interest - All

None

4. Minutes from the last meeting – Deputy Chair (Cllr Jonathan Drean)

Minutes agreed from the last meeting on 5 December 2022 by all members with the following amendment to reflect that;

- I. On Item 7, Page 3, Line 14, 'academes' spellings needs correction to 'academies'. Amendment seconded by Cllr Drean and Cllr Cresswell.

Actions:

- (a) PCFCD to provide information to Michael House to be circulated to schools
- (b) Michael House to correct a mistake on 'Local Authority to SACRE Update' within the school GCSE/A-Level data section, highlighted at the meeting.

- (c) Asif Siddique to receive 'Ofsted Inspection Updates' and LA Officer to SCARE Update' from Michael House and share with all SACRE members.
- (d) MH also to provide data from Office of National Statistics, to be sent out as additional appendix to these minutes
- (e) Michael House to speak to Emma on Constitution Review before AGM
- (f) Michael House to include Ben Kerr in the SACRE Sub groups activity regarding Collective Worship
- (g) Michael House to raise issues with Jim Barnicott regarding the delay in the 'Services 4 School's' catalogue, that the PCFCD highlighted
- (h) Ed Pawson to send the RE Hub presentation to be shared with SACRE Members
- (i) Sara Wells to send the list of PCFCD's activities to Michael House to be included on School's Bulletin

5. Chairs Urgent Business – Deputy Chair (Cllr Jonathan Drear)

None

6. LA Officer to SACRE Update - Michael House

SACRE Budget Position – 2022/2023 (to 20th of March 2023)

Annual resources: £13105 (£12000 + £1105)

In-Year spend: £225 (NASACRE subscription + supply Cover - chair)

Planned / expected Spend

- One-Off Claims expected (Supply Cover) TBC
- Proposed RE Professional Advisor to SACRE Role (£5K / £6.5K TBC)- Ed Pawson will be Professional Advisor to SACRE, next stage is to go through the more detailed agreement between ourselves and the Council.
- RE Conferences

Michael also presented GCSE Data (2022) on religious studies and stated that the data has been more difficult to collect in the recent years (*Data included within SACRE Members Pack*)

Michael also presented religious studies A-level data – 2022 (*Data included within SACRE Members Pack*).

Cllr Cresswell suggested that more detailed and historical data showing trends (including reasons) will be more useful going forward.

Claire Wills suggested that detailed analysis of results will show how inspiring the teachers are associated with that subject.

Lesley Clark stated that St Boniface school and Notre Dame work together now, and the A level is all done at Notre Dame, so a separate figure for Saint Boniface school is not available. Last year St Boniface's school didn't enter anyone for GCSE.

Local Authority facilitation of SACRE – Action Plan

Michael reviewed the Action Plan (Included within SACRE Members Pack) and took questions for the group.

Michael House stated that before the AGM this year there will be a review of the Constitution, which will be looking at the legislation, a review of what's currently there from the local authority. This will then come to SACRE for consultation and then there will be a vote on that and agree at this stage.

CLlr Aspinall commented that it needs to have been agreed beforehand and Emma will advise on that.

7. Ofsted Inspection Updates - Michael House

Michael referred to the report in the agenda pack that contains information on Ofsted inspection updates on schools. In Plymouth 11 schools were inspected since last term, In 3 of those schools RE is referred to as an area of development, 4 schools have been mentioned positively and 4 have not been mentioned at all. 9 of them are Primary and 2 are Secondary schools.

8. LTLRE and RE Hub Update- Katie Freeman

No updates – Katie sent apologies

Ed Pawson shared an RE Hub presentation.

Ed Pawson is the RE Hub lead and contact point across the SW. This new initiative which is trying to connect people across the RE world. So the project designed to equip, link and grow breadth of support and resource.

The project is the combination of several projects working on how to best support RE and interactions between teachers, professional development and resource providers and research communities.

IT ultimately seeks to enable teachers to teach with greater confidence through their access to support, knowledge, training and resources available in their region. This is about linking us up together. It's about linking schools, primary secondary, local authority, diocese etc.

Ed Pawson to send the RE Hub presentation to be shared with SACRE Members.

Ed Pawson suggested that Sara Wells may like to pick this up in her input to circulate and to explain how that will develop into the work she is doing.

9. Holocaust Memorial Day Update- Lesley Clark

Lesley have had nothing from anybody about this. This may be because of teacher's strikes and large amount sickness that there was in the beginning of the spring term. Schools may be catching on the national curriculum after the recent difficult times. This is disappointing but not entirely unexpected.

Lesley confirmed that because of a poor response the competition for this year has been closed now. Cllr Aspinall asked Lesley to keep SACRE updated with the next year's competition in future meetings. Annmarie Allchurch suggested Lesley to send the information to schools as soon as possible via newsletter, flyers or by any other appropriate channels.

Claire Wills suggested that the deadline should be after GCSE exams as schools will be very busy during exams.

Cllr Cresswell suggested that given the pressures school are in, perhaps this could be delivered via school Literacy and English curriculum.

Annmarie Allchurch commented that this can be delivered in any school giving lessons on World War 2, and also within PSHE curriculum (teaching Respect and Tolerance) and RE curriculum.

Sara Wells offered her support in communication this via flyers in September 2023. This could also go via school bulletin.

Benn Kerr suggested to communicate with schools before summer holidays so that school can plan in advance.

Cllr Drean summarised that before summer 2023 we should be having a plan to be put out to schools about what we will be doing in September and then in September we start again with asking for ideas, dates, what we're looking for etc. He added that If we go along the lines of what do we want to do this time with a poem or something else or the topic of the Holocaust Memorial. Ben Kerr, Lesley Clark and Annmarie Allchurch can help on how to phrase it because we are looking at two different age groups (primary and secondary). After the half term in May or in early June, Michael can send it out in very last bulletin before.

Michael House said that he can do it also through the schools education bulletins which goes to head teachers. In regards to matching it to areas of the curriculum said this will be out there, probably on Holocaust Memorial Day website.

10. Plymouth Centre for Faith and Cultural Diversity - Sara Wells

Regarding RE Hub suggestions from Ed Pawson, Sara Wells said that she had a good conversation last week with Ed Pawson about this project and it sounds really exciting. So the first step for her as a centre is to train to become accredited as a centre, to be able to go on to the website and then to talk with Ed Pawson and his colleagues about how to roll back forward with speakers to ensure that they are accredited as well.

In addition to the above, also invite speakers to schools outside of this area, and equally PCFCD might be able to source speakers from outside the area for their schools as well. So it's a really exciting piece of work that they are interested to get going with. They have their training book for next week.

Ed Pawson to continue his communication with Sara Wells on school's accreditation and other related issues.

David Evans highlighted that he was recently in a meeting arranged by Churches Together in Plymouth. There were 30 people who were going into various schools around Plymouth in various different capacities. The new Bishop of Plymouth Bishop James also spoken in the meeting. David Evans offered his help to feedback to Churches Together in Plymouth in terms of facilitating and linking with Sara Wells and Ed Pawson. David also highlighted that he has been to Mayflower School with his family and was impressed with RE work in the school. Sara W confirmed that Mayflower work very closely with PCFCD.

Ed Pawson and Sara Wells thanked David for the offer and added that this will be a valuable connection to have. Ed Pawson will also get in touch with Bishop James who he already acquainted with. David confirmed that the current chair of Churches Together is Mark Oliver from Plymstock Chapel.

Claire Wills asked if PCFCD provide any provisions for specialist settings in terms of visiting speaker's training to meet the needs of these children.

Sara Wells said that PCFCD offer three half days training but don't specifically train for special schools. The centre always work with schools though to find out what's needed and bespoke those sessions accordingly. RE hub in contrast offer a light touch training.

Michael House highlighted that there's been a possible spend that would have put towards Holocaust Memorial Day competition. Michael asked if there is an aspect of what we may need funding for. There is a budget for this that could be used.

Cllr Aspinall commented that perhaps SACRE can support specialist setting more. Ed Pawson confirmed there are no cost for accreditation. Sara W seconded Cllr Aspinall's suggestion and highlighted the need of finding more funding streams in addition to Cllr's Community Grants as covid hit PCFCD extremely hard and their income just disappeared as schools closed. She said we are getting to the point where there is a distinct possibility that the centre may not be able to continue in its current form if finances aren't found in the next 12 months.

Professor David Salter stated that he has been a trustee for PCFCD for around 8 years and would welcome any financial support from SACRE. The centre has been working for nearly 20 years and work closely with RE hub too and the additional funding from SACRE could be shared with RE hub too in some ways e.g. training for special schools etc.

Lesley Clark commented on funding for supply cover for teachers from the SACRE budget as apparently it was going to be brought up in the budget. Lesley also highlighted the need of serving teachers on SACRE.

Cllr Aspinall explained that this issues has already been resolved and on the SACRE constitution it is clear that where needed supply teachers can attend. She also added that we are working on providing very clear instructions to the teachers who need this information so that they know what proof they would need to show when a cover is being ordered and how their business managers claim for it. Unfortunately, it has got lost a little bit but she had spoken with Michael House and Jim Barnicott and was aware that the issue had been resolved.

Michael H confirmed that they are trying to make the process simpler. At the moment all claims are processed via him. He also added that this is covered in the constitution and that in Devon, they have it within their constitution that all members can claim reasonable travel expenses. Michael also said that this would be slightly different wording in Plymouth constitution, so maybe for the group today to agree on that before the constitution is reviewed.

Cllr Drean added that we will need to explicitly explain what is meant to be an addendum or special e-mail. Cllr Aspinall reiterated that we definitely need teachers on SACRE for their valuable input and there is a strong need to streamline the process. She added that we will resolve such issues as soon as possible.

Claire Wills was happy to support any training needs for special schools and happy to work with PCFCD and Ed Pawson.

Sara Wells asked if the remaining SACRE budget will be carried over to the next year or would be lost? Sara would like to use this funding rather than being lost.

Cllr Aspinall commented that this is a reasonable proposal and if Sara Wells could put something together fairly quickly and get in touch with lead officer to agree on it. Cllr Drean seconded this. Michael stated that it will not be him but will relay to Senior Management. He also added that in the previous years, SACRE had not been using its full budget. The available funding may be £4000 -£5000 but will not be able to confirm the exact amount until the amount of Ed Pawson's services are finalised.

SACRE agreed to adopt Devon's expenses claims until Plymouth have their own and Michael House to send that out to everyone. The travel expenses should be within a reasonable limit and supported by a receipt and should be signed off by school business managers.

Ed Pawson commented that in order for SCARE not going out of budget and spending too much on expenses and supply cover, we would need to be careful on the wording of the offer in the constitution.

Ed Pawson to work on the wording to avoid any misinterpretation.

Anmarie Allchurch commented that school finances are very tight at the moment and for teachers to attend SACRE meetings they will need funding for supply cover.

PCFCD SACRE Update from Sara Wells

- The Spring Term has been a very busy in the office. We have received nearly 200 booking requests in this term, most for multiple sessions, so well over 200 sessions and visits delivered between Jan – March. Particular focus on CNY Workshops, HMD / Learning from Solly Workshops & Piggy & Woof Easter Workshops, alongside the normal Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Humanism, Buddhism sessions and visits to Plymouth Synagogue & PIETY Islamic Centre.
- Last round of training has given us a new Jewish, Hindu, Muslim & Kenyan Cultural speakers, but we are always, actively looking for more speakers from either faith or cultural backgrounds to train.
- We successfully bid for funding from the Keyham Sparks initiative and this has enabled us to deliver interactive British Values sessions this term to pupils aged 4-6 across 3 schools with a strong focus on empathy. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- Schools are currently deciding if they want to re-subscribe to us for the next financial year from April 2023. Please encourage any schools you come in contact with to take out a new subscription or re-subscribe.

Concern that PCC have not yet sent out the Services4schools brochure – will make servicing the school after the Easter Break very difficult and may also delay payments? It will be difficult for us as a very small, local charity to service schools in the Summer Term but not receive their subscription payments until September at the earliest.

- As always, funding for our work continues to be an issue as a small charity, we are extremely grateful to those Councillors who supported us via their Community Grant Fund this financial year; please don't forget us next year. Any ideas/ other opportunities for PCC / SACRE / Councillors to help us financially going forward would be gratefully explored!

Sara Wells also highlighted the importance of the brochure and the potential impacts and funding implications due to the delay.

Annmarie Allchurch also highlighted the need of timely communication especially with Academies so that they can factor this in their finances.

Jim Barnicott advised Sara to contact Amanda Paddison (Head of Service) about this.

Sara Wells to send the list of PCFCD's activities to Michael House to be included on School's Bulletin.

11. Members Updates – All

SACRE discussed the email received by SACRE Plymouth regarding collective worship (30/01/23); 'A case for inclusive assemblies' from Mr Andrew Edmondson – coordinator of Chichester Humanists.

Benn Kerr: Andrew was a SACRE representative but is no longer a SACRE representative. He is a coordinator and the context of his email is mostly his opinions. It might even be a mistype on his part, which is about being put on SACRE and breaking the law, I think he meant the opposite of that. It doesn't represent a Humanist issue. What he said will not change anything. But collective worship is broadly Christian in nature and being slightly incompatible with a multicultural society and 76% of schools are avoiding that in one way or another. My opinion is that we need to work on being much more inclusive in what we do when it comes to collective worship. I'd be interested in getting involved in the 'Time to Breathe' again.

A child not being able to absent themselves from compulsory worship without the permission of their parents feels like a little bit of an impingement of the belief and conscience rights and that is also the belief of the Humanist UK. Also, a student having to opt out and then being singled out doesn't feel very inclusive. We can provide more meaningful alternatives for those students who absent themselves with the permission of their parents. It might be useful for us to think about how we might support schools and individuals who want to do that. One of the recent cases Andrew has highlighted where parents who successfully won in court where it seemed the school refused to provide a meaningful alternative.

My suspicion is most schools do not provide a meaningful alternative, but probably would if they were asked to. We can pay more attention to meaningful alternatives of either nonspecific or non-religious or inclusive, something that's nonreligious is accessible to everybody.

BHA's position is to change the law without harassing other people and this is still work in progress.

Michael House: We will bring it to the group for discussion and Ben to join the sub group on reviewing Time to Breathe.

Lesley Clark: As the Roman Catholic representative, we get inspected. We have a special section 48 which covers RE and Catholic life, and one of the elements of this is to have a collective worship. I don't know of any children who don't want to participate in services or any parents who've ever. This is because they've actually chosen to send their children to a Catholic school and they're not all Catholics so, if you were to go along with what this gentleman has suggested then the Catholic schools would have to be excluded from that.

Professor David Salter: It relates to Quaker meetings at the university. There used to be a monthly Quaker meetings at the university, which was lapsed due to covid and other pressures. We are trying to get the local Quaker meeting going and the Faculty of Health at the University is also supporting these meetings. In the course of that, I've become aware that Personal and Spiritual Support Centre at the

university is going through some revamp and there are range of possibilities still being discussed. The intent is to offer a broadly based mental health support to students and potentially to staff as well. The faith-based side of it is still being sorted out. There is a new manager there (Debbie Clement Large), who is very keen on the sociological support. She wanted to get various things happening and one of those has been the Quaker meeting, which has begun. She is also intending to have some sort of faith based event or events to interest students or anyone wanting to come in. She attempted to get start a series of things but given various pressures, only one has been feasible so far, date of the next event is on 24th of April. There will be a Humanist speaker, Dr. Martin Lavelle, another speaker (Aarzo) and myself representing the Quaker community. I think the relevance to us here today is that a lot of people on the steering group which involves people from Muslim backgrounds and clerical religious backgrounds, did not come forward to take part, and the one who did and was then apparently stopped. We have ended up at this session with three people representing very broadly based, non-clerical systems of belief. If some of those people could become more involved as it would be disappointing if all those other systems of belief become sediment over by a fear. So, this is about awareness and for a hope that people will come forward who represent more traditional faiths as well.

Cllr Aspinall: According to this email from Mr Andrew Edmondson up to 11% of parents are forced to send their children to faith schools against their wishes. Presumably that's in smaller communities rather than in this City because we have a wide variety of schools that you don't have to send them to faith or religious schools and you don't have to send them to any of the cast schools or any of the Church of England schools. This paper appears to be written for a specific area.

Ben confirmed 11% is a national figure.

Annamarie Allchurch: Our school has a hall and a breakout space next to the hall and those children that don't want to come into assembly because they're not regulated or whose parents have said they don't want join the assembly, they will be in the breakout room. Actually, we don't have any children whose parents have said that they're not to go in. So it's more about regulation and then choose another particular time. They can hear everything that's being said in the hall and all of the collective worship is invitational. And some of them actually choose to come in but there's somebody in that room that looks after them.

The children aren't regulated enough so they're not going to, Kate. You're sitting for that period of time, which obviously is a larger number for us. They spend time, they just spend the time in their classroom, the children for whom whose parents have opted. We really only have one. And we explained to mum what goes on in our collective worship and have a quest knowing what goes on, which is really just a celebration of the children's.

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Claire Wills: In our school children who have opted not to join the collective worship remains in classroom, we really only have one. And we explained to mum what goes on in our collective worship. We are very careful about what we teaches to children as we have children from different religious backgrounds and some leave before the worship and just don't attend the worship.

Cllr Cresswell: I attended a training on Collective Acts of Worship last week that was very interesting. They stressed on that there's collective acts of worship and there's also assemblies. In my experience Assemblies are very inclusive and there might well be some elements that are collective act of worship. Where I used to teach there were children who were Plymouth Brethren and those children were able to slip out and sit back and that seemed to generally work very effectively and was quite seamless. We used to have a singing assembly, which wasn't always about singing of hymns. It could be singing of all sorts of things.

12. Any Other Business – Deputy Chair (Cllr Drean)

None

13. Date and venue of next meeting - Asif Siddique

1:30pm Wednesday 19 July 2023, Warspite Room, Council House.