

## **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**Tuesday 2 July 2024**

**Present:** Cllr Tess Blight (TB, Chair), Cllr Sue Dann (CSD), Cllr Chip Tofan (CCT), Arezoo Farahzad (AF, Baha'i Community), Claire Wills (CW, Special Schools), Sara Wells (SW, PCFCD), Dr Catherine Bowness (DCB, Diocesan Board of Exeter), Lesley Clark (LC, Roman Catholic Diocese), Professor David Salter (PDS, Quaker Community), Jasmin Rhead (JR, NEU, All Saints), Deborah Temple (DT, Co-opted Jewish Community rep), Martyn Cox (MC, Humanist UK), Michael House (MH, PCC Education Officer), Ed Pawson (EP, Advisor to Plymouth SACRE), Asif Siddique (AS, SACRE coordinator)

**Attended remotely:** Cllr Sally Cresswell (CSC), Nic Gibson (NG, Pagan Community), Muhunthiny Sivasothy (MS, Hindu Community), Chaz Singh (CS, Co-optee Sikh Rep), Kerry Wardle (KW, DHSB), Giles Freathy (GF, Marjon, RE Lecturer), Dr Ian Jamison (DIJ, Teacher of RS - Plympton Academy), Selina Day (SD, Marjon)

**Apologies for absence:** Cllr Kathy Watkin (CKW), Dr Judith Beckman (DJB, Jewish Community), Reverend David Evans (DE, Baptist Church), Katie Freeman (KF, Vice Chair, Diocesan Board of Exeter), Tatiana Wilson (TW, Church of England), Bhai Gurmit Singh (BGS, Sikh Community),

The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 3.30 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.*

### **Welcome (Chair)**

The Chair (CTB) welcomed the attendees and highlighted that this is the first SACRE meeting after launching of the new agreed syllabus. She added that a really positive feedback has been received for this event.

### **AGM Section of Meeting – (Ed Pawson)**

EP commented that this meeting is SACRE's AGM and that a new chair was needed to be appointed. EP added that nominations are open to members in Group A, B, C and D only.

Election of SACRE Chair: CSC nominated CTB, this was seconded by CCT. CTB was unanimously elected as the Chair of SACRE for another year.

Election of SACRE Vice- Chair: One nomination was received from CSD for KF to continue as the SACRE Vice-Chair, seconded by JR. KF was unanimously elected as the Vice-Chair.

Review of Membership: discussed in agenda item 'Review of Membership'

### **Declarations of interest – All**

Chair declared that she is now a trustee for Plymouth Centre for Cultural Faith and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD).

AF and PDS are also Trustees for PCFCD. SW is a Centre Manager at PCFCD. Chair also commented that Plymouth Councillors supporting PCFCD via Community Grants will also need to declare their interest going forward. She added that Councillors haven't started any donations yet this year because of the elections, but as soon as that happens, they will need to declare it.

### **Welcome to New Members (Chair):**

Chair welcomed Martyn Cox (MC) as the new Humanist UK representative. MC has worked as a senior leader in education for 20 years and most recently in Plymouth as a head teacher at Scott Medical and Healthcare College. In Exeter, he has also been a principal of a college and a school for young people with complex needs and visual impairment.

Chair also welcomed Selina Day (SD) from Marjon who will deputise for GF in SACRE meetings. SD has been with Marjon for nearly six years and currently working as a lecturer and program lead for BA primary education. She is also completing her PhD in looking at religious education in children's literature.

Chair informed the members that Cllr Tina Tuohy, as Plymouth Lord Mayor, could not attend meetings that are of a political nature. Therefore, there will be a vacancy for another councillor, which will need filling for the next meeting.

Chair added that former Councillor John Mahony is no longer a SACRE member and has been replaced by Cllr Kathy Watkin (CKW)

Chair presented flowers and a card to DCB who is leaving Plymouth SACRE after 20 years. Chair thanked DCB for her advice, guidance and contributions she had made over the years.

EP highlighted that there is a vacancy for a primary teacher on SACRE that needs filling. SW to put forward names to fill this vacancy.

### **Review of the previous minutes – Chair**

The Committee agreed that minutes from the last meeting held on 13 March 2024 were an accurate record of meeting.

### **Actions from the current meeting**

- a) Chair and EP to look into filling a councillor's vacancy for the next meeting.
- b) EP to add SD to membership list and remove former Cllr John Mahony and Cllr Tuohy.
- c) SW to put forward names for a primary teacher vacancy on SACRE
- d) MH to investigate the delays in relation to the brochure being sent to schools, containing information on subscription to PCFCD for the 2024/25 financial year.
- e) EP and MH to liaise about head teacher's conference planned in Autumn 2024 in Plymouth
- f) EP and AF to get in touch regarding Ofsted inspection in Millbay Academy.
- g) CW to interact with Courtland School and support around their latest inspection outcomes.
- h) EP to send a letter of support to Plympton Academy's MAT from Plymouth SACRE
- i) AS to include expenses claim documents in agenda pack for all future meetings.
- j) EP and MH to discuss how to host and access the new RE syllabus document online in Plymouth
- k) EP and JR to get in contact with SW regarding sharing contact list of RE contacts in Plymouth and other areas. EP to check if there are any data protection issues around this.
- l) JR and SW to get in touch on linking PCFCD and hubs.
- m) AS to share presentation slides with members

### **Chair's Urgent Business – Chair**

None

### **Plymouth Agreed Syllabus (EP)**

EP stated that we had three launch days in Exeter, Bideford and Plymouth respectively and a final online launch day scheduled on 10 July 2024. He added that 65 delegates including teachers, SACRE members, RE Leads, and Plymouth Lord Mayor attended the Plymouth event and the feedback was really positive.

EP said that there will be more training on it and is currently putting in place training through Devon County Council which would be for both people who didn't come to launch and also people who did and want to know how to use it better.

EP touched on a briefing he gave to 120 head teachers in Devon recently and currently looking into doing the same in Torbay and Plymouth. EP also talked about the latest Ofsted report in this briefing. MH confirmed that there is a head teacher's conference planned in Plymouth on 21 November this year. EP commented that this gathering will be a useful interface. EP and MH to liaise about it.

CW commented that there is a need for a work stream for supporting special schools for adapting and meeting the needs of their young people especially with learning difficulties. EP agreed that it should be our work streams as the new syllabus does not support enough on the four core key stage 4 input either and this is one example of the feedback put forward in the launch event. EP suggested that a working group with other LA's will be a way forward. CW agreed to raise this via their SHAPS network.

EP shared that in the Bideford event, three pupils came from Okehampton College and talked really powerfully about why they value RE and what it means to them in their schooling in particular. One of the pupils talked about the importance of academic development of students in primary schools who are interested in taking RE in later years. The other pupil explained how RE could be a positive impact on community cohesion.

### **Local Authority Officer to SACRE Update (MH)**

MH gave updates on SACRE budget position.

SACRE Budget Position – (1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025) – Updated, end of June 2024.

Annual resources: £13,105 (£12000 ESG+ £1105 Revenue)

In-Year spend to date: (£0.00 Total)

Planned / Projected spend 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025: £12,017.40 (Total) Approx.

Projected Income: Between £2,000-£4,500? Delegate Attendance at Plymouth Launch Event (Syllabus Launch 19/06/24), TBC

Balance: \*TBC Between £1087.50 and £5,587.50 Approx. (Annual Resource – In Year Spend & Projected Spend, + Income)

*\*Figures to be updated at the SACRE meeting (02/07/24)*

Please refer to 'LAOtS Update Summer 2024' in the agenda pack for full details.

AS to include expenses claim documents in agenda pack for all future meetings.

MH commented that some of the figures in relation to launch conference needed confirming and envisaged that some amounts will be paid at an earlier date. He is also expecting some

money to come back in from Devon as they were handling the bookings. He projected that there should be between £1000 -£5000 leftover at the end of this process.

MH thanked AS for his support on the new syllabus launch conference.

### **Ofsted Inspections Update (EP)**

Please refer to the document titled '2024 07 Ofsted reports Plymouth schools'. EP updated members on OFSTED Inspections in schools since March 2024 till present. EP and AF to get in touch regarding Ofsted inspection in Millbay Academy. Positive comments were highlighted about St Peter CofE School.

Members commented that a detailed report backed up with evidences will be useful to get a clear picture of inspection in schools e.g. Courtland School. CW to interact the school and support around their latest inspection outcomes.

Positive commented noted about Ofsted inspections in Plympton Academy and Plymouth High School for Girls.

DJJ gave an insight into the recent changes and current issues in Plympton Academy in relation to RE. EP suggested to send a letter of support to the MAT from Plymouth SACRE.

CSC commented that Plympton Academy and Plymouth High School for Girls are part of the same academy trust and more can be explored about how the schools are promoting and developing religious education within the trust.

### **LTLRE and RE Hub Update – JR and EP**

EP informed that the 2024 annual conference will take place on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024, at the St Mellion Conference Centre and the Hub leaders training will be taking place on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 5<sup>th</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024.

He added that Plymouth hub is in a state of flux as JS picks up the role as secondary lead and KF stands down as primary lead. He said that a number of new hub leaders have joined the LTLRE team recently after launch events took place.

JS seconded EP's above comments and said that Plymouth launch event was a great networking and awareness raising opportunity and in which she managed to collect contact details from majority of the schools. She also added that she had emailed to staff in primary schools directly to make sure they're receiving the communication. She complimented that she had receive a very positive feedback about the launch event.

JS is currently looking into lesson planning around how the new syllabus can be delivered in schools. JS highlighted that they had the Exeter and East Devon Hub run and All-things Ofstead event and two Plymouth schools attended which was really nice.

EP, KF and JR to work together and look for a Primary Hub lead.

EP commented that school alliance are currently breaking down. MH said that PCC are not using Plymouth Teachers and School Alliance anymore. CW added that Special Needs Hub has also ended.

EP and JR to get in contact with SW regarding sharing contact list of RE contacts in Plymouth and other areas. EP to check if there are any data protection issues around this.

JS shared that she will be moving to Devonport High School for Girls in September 2024 from All Saints Academy. Her role in ASA has already been filled.

CDH suggested that EP needs to have a conversation outside SACRE with CSC, CTB and David Haley about getting schools to engage in agendas and topics, e.g. SEND agenda. She added that a lot of activities we do with PCFCD and in SACRE are about inclusion, tolerance and making Plymouth a Welcoming City and we should not be losing this by schools not engaging through an RE curriculum. There is a need that we have a breadth of knowledge across the schools, especially in secondary schools. This may not be just an RE issue but other issues (e.g. MATS engagement) and getting this level of understanding city-wide is important. CSC reiterated the above.

EP talked about [RE Hubs](#) website and the services they are offering.

### **Updates from RE Advisor (EP)**

EP talked about the national developments and said that we've just launched a service for local schools to start teaching in September which is realignment from a service we introduced five years ago as a SACRE. He also highlighted the importance of remaining aware of how RE changing in national context and whether we are in tune with these changes.

He added that a national document was published in May, which is called [Developing a Religion and Worldviews Approach in Religious Education in England](#).

This is a toolkit for developing the CoRE vision of a religion and worldviews (RW) approach. This is being offered as a resource for those who wish to use it and is part of an ongoing conversation, and is not the final word.

It has been written to try to help understand what the curriculum for today, tomorrow and in future should be looking like now. This document details about lived experiences, lifestyles, beliefs and practices, individual perspectives and individual worldviews rather than just seeing RE from a theological lens. EP commented that there is need that RE teachers are fully trained to deliver this new inclusive approach in schools.

DDS, JR, DCB, LC, AF and DT shared their view on this. SW added that faith speakers in PCFCD have been trained to adopt the above inclusive approach.

AP Shared the data on RE teachers training nationally and highlighted the declining figures in South West.

EP shared slide with members on "[Deep and meaningful? The Religious Education subject Report](#)" and stated that the quality of RE is not determined by the type of school or the source of its curriculum. Factors that contributed towards this included:

- strong teacher subject knowledge
- access to professional development
- regular time for RE lessons
- a well-organised curriculum containing knowledge chosen by leaders to enable pupils to deepen their understanding term by term'

EP also shared the key points on Ofsted RE report (2024) which included:

All schools

- Lack of sufficient depth of knowledge
- Lack of good quality CPD
- Pupils remember little
- Long gaps between lessons hindered recall
- Not enough opportunity for disciplinary or personal knowledge
- Concepts often over-simplified and compartmentalised
- Assessment not fit for purpose
- Misconceptions about non-religious worldviews

Secondary

- Restricted by examination content
- Examination skills taught too early
- Non-examined RE (KS4) limited and poor quality, if delivered at all

The main questions for school leaders were as follows:

- Does the school (and trust) have a designated, well-qualified RE lead?
- Do teachers have regular access to high quality RE CPD in school (across the trust)?
- Does the school allocate 5% of curriculum time for RE, at all key stages?
- Does the school have a planned, rigorous, coherent and sequential RE curriculum?
- Does the curriculum explore diverse disciplinary approaches?
- Does the curriculum develop pupils' personal knowledge?

Regarding Young Ambassador Project 2023-5, EP stated that;

- Pupils from Okehampton College and Okehampton Primary School, both members of the Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust, are taking part in this exciting 2-year project
- become advocates for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)
- talk about RWs with confidence
- develop pupil voice for RE, looking through different eyes
- be inspired to be champions of RE

He added that education partners will become more engaged with RWs conversations and deepen appreciation for value of RE to help build RE champions for the future

EP informed that the NASACRE Executive is making an application to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). They would like to offer an online forum on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 7-8pm. SACREs may send a representative to discuss any questions or comments you may have about NASACRE's CIO plans, including our proposed constitution, before we submit our registration.

Regarding recruitment of Secondary RE teachers and PGCE course at Marjon, GF commented that they had no applicants who were suitable last year but this year they had recruited two and additional two are at the interview stage. He confirmed that there will be secondary RE training at Marjon next year.

### **Holocaust Memorial Day Update – AF**

EP said that we are not planning anything this year but next, next year's theme is 'for a better future' that will take place on Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2025.

EP stated that he was interested in connecting schools with events that are taking place in the City and happy to send schools resources which are produced by Holocaust Memorial Day Trust but no events are currently being planned.

DT added that next year is probably the biggest one as it will be the 80th anniversary of the liberation and she is going to different places doing Holocaust talks.

AF said that PCFCD has already started plans in place and they have been in talks with Devon High School for Boys and College Road School, both are doing some fantastic things and perhaps SACRE can support as well. PCFCD also work with PCC to host the commemorations day in the Council building. In addition, there is a public event in the Peace Garden on the Hoe but this year they are looking to put some special events to which everyone is invited.

### **Plymouth Centre for Faith and Cultural Diversity – AF & SW**

SW went through what PCFCD mainly offers as an organisation and referred to the documents in the agenda pack.

She added that in Plymouth, the centre uses Services4Schools process (through Plymouth City Council) for schools to subscribe and there are still delays and they are still waiting for the final list of the subscribing schools for this financial year. PCFCD has been providing their service to all schools in good faith without knowing their subscription status therefore it is important to get this information as soon as possible so that they can receive the funding. MH said he will investigate it.

CW suggested that perhaps PCFCD could invoice the schools directly to speed up the process without going through PCC especially when most of schools are not maintained by the LA anymore.

SW also highlighted that schools are increasingly under financial constraints and struggling to continue their subscriptions. She added that it is important that SACRE and member organisations should work together to get more schools work with PCFCD especially when PCFCD can contribute significantly around the new syllabus and worldview approach.

SW shared that the centre has been incredibly busy.

JR and SW to get in touch on linking PCFCD and hubs.

AF and DDS talked about the uniqueness of PCFCD, the services it offers and its relevance with the new RE syllabus delivery etc. DDS asked whether NASACRE could be appraised about PCFCD in a hope that they can follow what PCFCD does and perhaps support PCFCD too.

EP commented that there are other groups, resources, forums and organisations in different context across the Country that are running in slightly different ways and that PCFCD is part of this network. SW commented that they are aware and coordinate with them but some of them are closing down due to financial pressures. She reiterated that with PCFCD is still unique in what it offers with the available funding.

CSD suggested that perhaps PCFCD could sell their services by actively participating and speaking in the relevant events such as the recent syllabus launch events. SW replied that it is a great idea and they will look into bringing some of PCFCD speakers to these events.

AF said that PCFCD will be hosting an Interfaith Festival on the Tuesday 26 November 2024 (afternoon, TBC), and requested SACRE members to put this date in their diaries. There will be a Holocaust Memorial Day on the Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 too.

**Any Other Business – Chair**

None

**Date and venue of next meeting - AS**

The next meeting will be held at 1:30pm on Tuesday 12 November 2024, Room TBC, Council House.