

# **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**Monday 13 November 2017**

## **PRESENT:**

Martin Edmonds, in the Chair.

Helena Mitchell, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Ball and Morris.

Mark Andrew Dearden, Katie Freeman, Gary Futcher, Anna Kelly and Ed Pawson.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Drean, Ben Kerr, Alison Williams and Elizabeth Hill.

Also in attendance: Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser), Helen Rickman (Democratic Support Officer) and Jamie Sheldon (Democratic Support Officer).

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.*

## 15. **Declarations of Interest**

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

## 16. **Minutes**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2017 are an accurate record subject to Councillor Ball's apologies being included.

## 17. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

## **Order of Business**

With the permission of the Chair, the order of business was changed and was reflected in the minutes below.

## 18. **Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity**

Claire Lindon provided Members with an update on the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity.

Members were advised that a new cohort of speakers had received 9 hours of training and had undertaken a faith training practice session in schools. The Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity had also been selected as Co-op's Local Cause; it was hoped that new resources would be bought for the centre.

Agreed that the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity newsletter would be sent to SACRE Members.

19. **Membership Issues**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) welcomed Ed Pawson to the meeting who was to replace Penny Burnside in Group B (The Church of England, appointed by the Exeter Diocesan Board of Education). In addition, Members were advised that representatives in Group A (Christian and other religious denominations, not including Church of England) were still required in order to better represent the major world faiths at the meeting.

Under this item Jonathan highlighted that several apologies had been submitted for the meeting despite dates and times being altered to facilitate attendance.

Agreed that Claire Linden would communicate the current vacancies on SACRE when looking for more faith speakers.

20. **Annual Report and Examination Results**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) advised Members that there was a requirement for the Annual Report and examination results to be published; this was currently in progress however key findings included:

- (a) for the first time in a decade there was a decline nationally in the number of children seeking entrance for GCSE studies in Religious studies;
- (b) in Plymouth the figure had increased as there were 821 pupils entered for the GCSE in RE whereas last year the figure was 659; for A-levels, 93 pupils had entered the examination and 100% had achieved a grade A-C;
- (c) there was considered to be more of an emphasis on academic subjects in the education system as Members were advised that approximately 5 lessons a week needed to be taught for a full GCSE however on the whole RE was only taught once a week.

Agreed that a letter would be sent to all schools directed to the Heads of RE and Headteachers congratulating those achieving in Religious Education, with a short paper to be included, written by Ed Pawson, which outlined different routes to deliver RE in Key Stage 4, to act as a guide.

21. **Commission on Religious Education - Interim Report**

Katie Freeman and Ed Pawson provided Members with an update on the Commission on Religious Education which was established to review the legal, education and policy frameworks for RE in schools. The interim report 'Religious Education for All' detailed four recommendations:

- I. There should be a national entitlement statement for RE which sets out of the aims and purpose of RE and what pupils should experience in the course of the

study of their subject.

2. This entitlement should become normative through non-statutory guidance as early as possible, and should ultimately become statutory, either to supplement or to replace current legislation on agreed syllabuses.
3. The national entitlement should apply to all state funded schools, including academies, free schools and schools of a religious character.
4. Independent schools should consider adopting the entitlement as an undertaking of good practice.

This consultation was open to individuals and groups and could be accessed by clicking the following link:

<http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/religious-education-for-all-commission-interim-report/>

Members raised the following comments and concerns:

- (a) it was considered that the average PGCE only included approximately 3 hours of how to teach RE – this was not enough;
- (b) there was an active hub in Plymouth which was a great resource for teachers however there was concern over the development of teachers that taught RE but didn't attend the hub;
- (c) there was concern that some teachers teaching RE didn't understand the basic elements of some religious beliefs;
- (d) Members raised the importance of SACRE and the issues surrounding a humanist representative having full membership at meetings;
- (e) Members raised concerns over Jonathan Marshall's impending retirement in March 2018; he confirmed that the Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity had a contract with Plymouth City Council and it was hoped that a replacement SACRE advisor would be appointed;
- (f) 60% of schools were academies and didn't have to follow the national curriculum – what affect was this having upon teaching RE?
- (g) it was considered that money, time and the compulsion to teach RE was having a negative effect upon the subject;
- (h) Members discussed a parent's right to withdraw a child from RE studies and if this had a link to lack of tolerance and understanding of different religions; it was highlighted that religious education was to 'educate' pupils on a variety of religions and beliefs and not to impart a 'view'.

Agreed that –

1. Jonathan Marshall as Religious Advisor would respond to the Religion for All consultation on behalf of the SACRE; Members were asked to contact Jonathan direct with responses they would like included;
2. Members would be emailed a copy of a paper which detailed the duty and legal requirement of Local Authorities to support SACRE;
3. A letter would be written to Councillor Mrs Beer, as portfolio holder for Children and Young People, seeking assurance regarding the future of officer support for SACRE; this issue would also be raised at the Council's budget scrutiny meeting in January 2018.

## 22. **Developing RE in Plymouth**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) provided Members with an update on Developing RE in Plymouth and the training awareness session with Barbara Wintersgill at the last meeting. The session focused upon what was considered to be 'good RE' in Plymouth and how it could be further developed, especially in terms of "how" to teach RE rather than "what" to teach. It was highlighted that RE was a broad subject which focused upon different kinds of skills and values.

Members noted the update.

## 23. **National and Local RE Updates**

Katie Freeman provided Members with an update on National and Local RE matters.

Members were advised that –

- (a) on 22 November 2017 an RE Commissioner was due to visit St Matthew's School and look at how RE was taught; it was hoped that a community school would also be available for the Commissioner to visit;
- (b) Plymouth's RE Hub was very active and offered good training sessions; there was concern surrounding primary teachers feeling very 'squeezed' and how the Hub could provide support;
- (c) a film on why RE is important in schools, shaped by DHSB student, Alizeh Rahman, was due to be broadcast by ITV; SACRE Members would be advised of the date when this would be shown on TV;
- (d) not many teachers from Plymouth were able to attend the Learn RE Conference; it was considered this was due to funding and the cost of supply teachers;
- (e) Louise Skingle Head of RE from Hele's school will joint lead the Hub offering a secondary college perspective and support;

- (f) Ed Pawson was due to write some information for the Mayflower 400 commemoration ;
- (g) the South West SACRE conference was scheduled for 5 March 2018; SACRE had the funds to send 2/3 people.

Members noted the updates.

#### 24. **Promoting Religious Tolerance in Schools and Implications for SACRE**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) advised Members that Alizeh Abdul Rahman was due to attend the meeting in order to provide an update on Promoting Religious Tolerance in Schools and Implications for SACRE however unfortunately she was unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments regarding her university application.

From an outline provided by Alizeh, Jonathan advised Members that she had been involved in work linked to Youth Parliament and religious tolerance in schools. As a result of conversations with pupils from Plympton Academy it was highlighted that students would welcome lessons that included a wider range of contemporary issues with more discussion and generally more interactive approaches. It is hoped that she will be able to attend the next SACRE meeting.

Members noted the update.

#### 25. **Collective Worship in Schools**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) provided Members with an update on Collective Worship in Schools.

Members were advised that the document attached to the agenda was sent to Headteachers at every school in Plymouth in order to highlight the importance of collective worship.

Agreed that the paper on collective worship would be emailed to every Headteacher in all Plymouth schools.

#### 26. **Remembering Solly Irving**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) paid tribute to Solly Irving.

Members were advised that Solly passed away in October 2017 and his family had organized a tribute to him at his local synagogue; Jonathan was asked by the family to attend and represent the 'Plymouth' aspect of his life. Jonathan initially contacted Solly in 2000 to come to Plymouth and speak to pupils regarding the Holocaust; from that first talk it was evident that Solly had a unique gift as he shared his personal experience of the Holocaust and came back to Plymouth every year. Solly shaped the lives of thousands of Plymouth's pupils, teachers and all who met him and he would be missed.

27. **HMD Plans for January 2018**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) provided Members with an update on Holocaust Memorial Day Plans for 27th January 2018.

Members were advised that Father Richard Silk, Chair of the Plymouth Council of Faiths and Chris Clewer (Chair of Churches together in Plymouth) were organizing the event for Plymouth and that the theme this year was; The Power of Words.

With this year's theme in mind, Members discussed the feasibility of planting a tree in the Peace Garden in memory of Solly Irving.

Members were also advised that Exeter's HMD concert event was scheduled for 1st February 2018.

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

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 12 March 2018 at 1.30pm at All Saints Academy.