

Shaping the Future

NASACRE Conference and AGM

Tuesday 17th May 2016

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London

11.30 Welcome and Introductions – David Hampshire

“May you live in interesting times”

Could be considerable unintended consequences from the White Paper and the changing education context e.g. academisation

11.40 Keynote address

The Rt.Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler – Sloss GBE

The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE, formerly President of the Family Division of the High Court was the first female Lord Justice of Appeal and until 2004, was the highest –ranking female judge in the United Kingdom. She has chaired many high profile enquiries and inquests. Baroness Butler-Sloss served as Chair for the recently published Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life.

‘Religion and Belief in British Public Life’ – report December 2015

Commission covered 2013, consisted of 20 representatives from faith/belief groups.

Need a new settlement for religion and belief.

Vision : a society at ease with itself in which everyone is valued

Need greater religion and belief literacy. Lack of this feeds antagonism. Urgent action required to combat stereotyping of religion belief groups.

Young people should be equipped with religion and belief literacy for economic and moral reasons.

World is a global village: business, arts etc.

Report has practical suggestions to improve the national religion and belief literacy.

“What you teach will be crucial because of its impact on the young people who will be leaders of tomorrow”.

Education

Many agreed syllabi present 'sanitised' pictures of religions and often have very little reference to non-religious worldviews.

Recommends – Introduction of a statutory entitlement to a nationally agreed framework for RE.

Training for teachers of RE needs to be overhauled. Attention should be given to training for RE on a similar level to the training in English and Maths.

Recommends – the repeal of statutory requirement for Collective Worship and possibly replacing with time for reflection which would be inclusive to equip young people for global village and enable their SMSC development.

Negative consequences to selecting pupils/staff on grounds of religion – recommend this is reduced.

Schools of a particular religious persuasion must widen their pupils' understanding of belief of others.

All staff should have training in discussing sensitive and controversial matters relating to religion and belief.

Recommendation-

"All pupils in state- funded schools should have a statutory entitlement to a curriculum about religion, philosophy and ethics that is relevant to today's society, and the broad framework of such a curriculum should be nationally agreed. The legal requirement for schools to hold acts of collective worship should be repealed, and replaced by a requirement to hold inclusive times for reflection"

"We must not allow schools to become introspective"

Question Time

- 1) Are SACRES putting the Report's recommendations into practice?
- 2) To what extent does the local determination of RE need to be continued? Can this manage to address the diversity of different communities?

12.45 NASACRE Business Meeting

- Minutes of AGM held 21 May 2015
- Chair's report
- Accounts and Treasurer's report
- Secretary's report
- Changes to the constitution
- New Exec. members: announcement
- Matters arising on the minutes
- A.O.B

Chair's Report

(David Hampshire)

Local authorities need to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. NASACRE trying to have stronger voice nationally and to ensure all SACREs are consulted.

Impacts of this in wider society

- Anxiety, indifference, hostility towards RE
- Loudest voice = from new atheists
- Religions literacy and fuzzy secularity

3 reports in the last year – all 3 recommend national coherence

RE for R.E.al

Role of SACRE = important alongside other professional and relevant bodies - a national panel to create a national framework for RE.

Recommendations-

“ A statutory National Framework for Religion and Belief Learning should be developed and be applicable to all schools, balancing shared national approaches with school level determination.”

“Since SACREs currently play a leading part in religion and belief learning, there is an urgent need for review of their role, and the role of others, such as professional bodies, local authorities, schools themselves, and other experts, in the forming of learning. This should inform and result in the appointment of a national panel to develop the framework.”

Issues of representation – who represents faith/belief communities?

How are they chosen?

Who speaks for whom and with what knowledge and experience?

Clarifying the muddle

- Collect worship
- Right to withdraw
- Faith Schools admissions policies
- Clarify religion in the life of the school

Is RE education formational, confessional?

How to clarify the muddle?

Purposes – content – structure of RE

Purpose

- Educational force in its own right
- Instrumental/useful eg. Cohesion

Content

- More breadth i.e. stretchy definition of religion and belief

Structure

- Compulsory RE plus optional GCSE – what goes where?

Sort the purpose of RE and then content and structure will follow.

Assumption that better understanding of others leads to more love for them. Is this so?

- Churches (especially CofE) have role (culturally and historically many people still attached to Christianity, part of their identity)
- Politicians

Religious Literacy

- Attitude
- Disposition (how do you feel about)
- Knowledge (stretchily defined)
- Skills (questioning skills)

Challenge for

Everybody, regardless of religion, belief or none

Question time

- Is RE about improving the quality of our disagreements?
- Are there any other countries ahead of England with their RE /religious literacy?

4.10 Westhill/NASACRE awards

Awards given to

- 1) Liverpool
- 2) Newham
- 3) North Yorkshire
- 4) There is a further £4000 award still available, submission deadline 31st July 2016

(Could the Pan-Berkshire Hub submit an application to embed and extend the 'Crossing the Bridges' Project?)

4.20 Closing remarks from the Chair (David Hampshire)

Thanked all the organisers and all SACRE members for their continued work for RE.

Notes by Jan Lever

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