

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY, 16TH JUNE, 2021

Present:

R Lawrence (Vice-Chairman), C Smith (Vice-Chairman), B Joshi, S Hawksworth, D Kenchington, J Kelly, N Coupe, K Barker, V Saunders, Cllr N Greene, Cllr M Le Poidevin and D Pegg

Apologies:

L Ford-Horne, R Lawton, P Thomson, T Willis and Cllr B Dion

51 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Lynda Ford-Horne, Rob Lawton, Peter Thompson, Trevor Willis and Councillor Bryan Dion.

Debbie Tendler attended the meeting as a formal substitute for Lynda Ford-Horne.

There were no declarations of interest.

Cheryl Smith (Joint Vice-Chair) in the Chair for agenda items 1 to 5 and 11 and Ruth Lawrence (Joint Vice-Chair) in the Chair for the remaining agenda items.

52 Opening Reflection - Sally Hawksworth

The meeting began with a period of reflection led by Sally Hawksworth.

53 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

54 BCP SACRE Chair's Report (Cheryl Smith, Joint Vice Chair)

On behalf of the Chair, the Vice-Chair reported the following items:

Month of Ramadan

A letter had been sent to all schools providing guidance to schools about pupils wishing to be fasting whilst at school and included a format for a suggested letter to parents inviting parents to notify their school if their child was fasting and asking parents what action, if any, they would like the school to take to support them.

Israel and Palestine

Guidance to schools had also been provided to support schools in discussion of the conflict in Israel and Palestine and about avoiding conflict and inadvertent offence in terms of language used and a flow of positive communication on this sensitive issue was being encouraged.

Positive responses to provision of this type of guidance was reported from within schools who could struggle to address these types of issue, particularly with younger children. The guidance was therefore also particularly useful in providing different contextual material for use across different age groups.

National NHS Thank-you Day

Suggestions for supporting this initiative in schools had also been circulated.

55 Situation in Schools (Georgie Pinder)

An overview on the pandemic situation was provided and, although it continued to provide significant challenges, particularly having a big impact in January and February 2021, schools were continuing to respond exceptionally well. There was close working with Public Health

Wednesday, 16th June, 2021

and schools were working hard to maintain their 'safe space' status. Schools were applying a process of dynamic risk assessment on the basis of their own individual setting with some central support in areas common across the service such as Sports Days. Although central government guidance had, eventually, been received, the assessment and testing regime had added extra pressure on staff and was another area where central support was made available from the Council. With the pandemic still impacting, the Council would continue to provide support for long-term planning including collection and collation of assessment results. Within the SEND settings, particular emphasis had been placed upon encouraging vulnerable young people into the SEND settings which remained largely open.

Regular communication continued to be maintained with RE leaders in schools and, on the wider front regionally through the Regional Schools Commissioner and, in parallel, elected Councillor members of BCP SACRE continued to press Central Government for information.

56 Update on feedback from Questionnaire (Georgie Pinder)

Agenda items 6 and 7 were taken together.

The formal Agreed Syllabus Review ('ASR') process with a view to establishing a single BCP Council-wide syllabus was now underway commencing with a questionnaire and useful feedback was starting to come through. Initial headlines from responses included a better focus for SEND; support and resources for teachers; the importance of a 'world view' approach and a desire from RE teachers to be involved in the syllabus development process. A summary of responses received would be sent to schools with a view to stimulating further feedback and maximising the level of engagement.

SACRE would also have a key role. Especially through the Agreed Syllabus Conference which was another formal stage of the consultation. It was also crucial to have input from representatives from all faiths and this too could be provided through SACRE.

The deadline for the final Syllabus draft was September 2022 and feedback would be provided to SACRE throughout the process. Dorset Council and Hampshire County Council were undertaking a similar process and there was opportunity for joint working. At Hampshire, after a year of preparation, an agreed Syllabus was close to adoption and launch which, once again, could help to inform progress in the BCP area.

57 Syllabus Review - Timetable (David Rees)

Agenda items 6 and 7 were taken together.

58 BCP RE Conference - Update (David Rees and Georgie Pinder)

The annual BCP RE Conference would take place on a 7th July 2021 in a 'virtual' and free of charge format. The programme for the event was being finalised and, coming at the start of the Agreed Syllabus Review process, it would also be an opportunity for further discussion about the review. All BCP SACRE members are invited to attend the Conference and registration details were signposted.

59 Equality and Diversity (Sam Johnson)

The BCP Council Equality and Diversity Officer provided an update on current issues including work underway looking at how the Council engages externally through its functions of community leadership and public services delivery and in its capacity as a major local employer.

Internally, examples existed across the Council of bodies such as SACRE coming together for specific purposes and contributing to good practice and outcomes which supported the common good.

60 BCP SACRE Action Plan and OFSTED Report feedback (David Rees)

The current Action Plan had been circulated with the agenda divided, as usual, between Core Business priorities and provision of support for schools and teachers. Significant issues were

Wednesday, 16th June, 2021

highlighted. It was agreed that the Agreed Syllabus Review work should be included as a regular item on the Plan going forward. Items for the next Newsletter were requested by the end of August.

A short summary of the May 2021 OFSTED report was presented and a full copy was available for members requiring extra depth of information. Key points brought out in the Report were the under-resourcing of RE, the fact that subject specialism was not always available as well as the need to raise the status of RE teaching and to develop clarity about what needed to be done to improve the quality of teaching RE. The division of time allocation between Christianity and other faiths was referenced and the value of involving structured input from other faith practitioners was emphasized.

High quality RE assessment was also reported as a theme and once again lack of clarity in this important area had been identified. It was noted that the Council planned to provide support to schools to develop practice around this subject. The important links with the Agreed Syllabus Review work were again identified.

61 Networks Update (David Rees and Nicola Coupe)

The Joint Vice-Chair reported progress being made within the Primary Schools RE leaders' network. Work on developing a list of groups who were able to welcome schools to their place of worship was described and this was also something that the Diocese was wanting to pursue and there were identified opportunities for joint working.

It was noted that there was potentially funding from the Salisbury Diocese for an RE Hub lead from BCP Council area and discussion were underway to identify how this could be progressed.

The recent Diocese Conference had been well attended with five BCP Council schools represented. Analysis of a reasons for non-attendance was reportedly the cost of cover supply at the potential participant's school and this raised the issue of the relative merits of virtual conference versus the traditional format although supply cover was still needed to enable attendance at a virtual event.

In the meantime, a huge number of free resources for RE continued to be available from a wide range of sources and there was a desire to encourage take up, particularly at secondary school level.

Cheryl Smith, Joint Vice-Chair, informed the SACRE that she would be stepping down from SACRE for the time being to pursue a Leadership Qualification but would be able to continue with her role as Network lead.

62 NASACRE Conference - Feedback (David Rees)

A report would be submitted to a future SACRE meeting.

63 Future Meeting Dates

It was agreed that there be discussions with the Chair with a view to selecting a schedule of dates for the termly meetings of BCP SACRE during the 2021/22 academic year including discussion about format in terms of virtual or face-to-face meeting style.

In closing they meeting, the Joint Vice-Chair paid tribute to the contribution to the SACRE of her co Joint Vice -Chairman, Cheryl Smith, who was standing down from the Committee and colleagues wished her success in the future.

Duration of the meeting: 4.00 - 5.45 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Wednesday, 16 June 2021