

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 2021

Present: Lynda Ford-Horne in the Chair.

R Lawrence (Vice Chair), R Lawton, S Hawksworth,
J Kelly, K Barker, T Willis, Cllr B Dyon, Cllr M
LePoidevin and D Pegg.

Apologies: P Thomson, N Coupe, V Saunders and
Cllr N Greene

64 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Thompson, Nicola Coupe, Vincent Saunders, Councillor Nicola Greene and Julia Coleman.

There were no declarations of interests.

65 Opening Reflection

Georgie Pinder began the meeting with a period of opening reflection

66 Minutes of previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting on 16 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

67 Equality and Diversity

It was agreed that the BCP Council Equalities and Diversity Officer be invited to submit a written update to the next meeting.

68 Situation in Schools (Georgie Pinder)

An overview was presented of the current response to the pandemic situation and, although it continued to present significant challenges, schools were continuing to respond exceptionally well and some signs of normality were beginning to emerge within schools. The Chair described her recent visits to two schools and visitors to schools were being welcomed. Some face-to-face parents' evenings had also recommenced and the 'bubble' regime was being discontinued where appropriate. There did, however, remain in place limits on bigger gatherings such as assemblies whilst emphasis was also continuing to be placed upon the wellbeing of students and staff. Many settings were operating within the context of significant staff absences. The BCP Council continued to work with schools and with Public Health Dorset to apply contingency measures as needed. Whole-school Covid testing was happening only in Secondary Schools with schools developing their own risk assessment approach and implementing mitigations and local protocols where identified as necessary.

69 RE in Schools (Georgie Pinder)

Performance and comparison data for RE at Key Stage 4 was presented and it was explained that the limitations nationally and locally of the 2019/20 data set meant that the information was not being used as a performance measure for schools but to support schools in the process of recovery from the pandemic. The data was being used to help with understanding the actual impact on students and to support the development of educational pathways going forward.

The headlines from the data were that a higher proportion of students in the BCP Council area had been entered for Religious Studies ('RS') at GCSE level than was the case nationally and that those students achieving a pass or good pass also exceeded their national peers. Other highlighted indicators were that the proportion of BCP Council area female students achieving a pass or a good pass was higher than their male counterparts and that the gender gap had slightly widened with a higher entry rate from male students than from female. It was also noted that disadvantaged students in the BCP Council area were comparing well in comparison with their peers nationally.

SACRE were informed that the full copy of the detailed data set and findings would be circulated after the meeting and would now be used in the process of setting education priorities going forward. In response to questions, the different ways in which RS was offered within the curriculum were explained together with the different course formats that were available and the different ways in which RS was offered across schools, be it on a compulsory or optional basis. Similar data for Key Stage 5 would be presented to the next meeting.

Members of SACRE recorded their thanks to the Education Data and Performance Analyst within the BCP Council Management Information Team for his work in assembling and presenting the data and thanks were also recorded to schools for submitting the raw data material.

70 Questionnaire (Georgie Pinder) and Agreed Syllabus Conference ('ASC') (Lynda Ford-Horne and David Rees)

The process of syllabus review was reported to be well underway with the initial Questionnaire stage now completed and results from 18 settings now in the process of analysis and interpretation. Initial indications of the emerging picture were available with a mixture of responses about how the BCP Council syllabus was being used in particular schools and areas identified for attention as part of the review.

The Chair described the outline timescales for the forthcoming review which included a tight schedule of work and a programme aimed to concentrate minds. Feedback to the SACRE would be provided at the end of January 2022 with a draft format presented and agreed in March prior to submission to the BCP Council as a final stage. Launch of the new Syllabus was expected in June 2022. It was confirmed that contribution from schools and from teachers would be a key and essential part of the process including particularly the SEND sector and input from Christchurch schools who were not within the BCP Council area at the time of the previous review. There were clearly a wide range of issues to address with the objective of agreeing a syllabus which provided useful but not too detailed guidance and which reflected the way that the school environment was evolving.

71 BCP RE Conference (David Rees, Lynda Ford-Horne and Georgie Pinder)

The Chair thanked everyone who had been involved in the delivery, over a short lead-in period, of a very successful RE Conference and the event had showcased the high quality of experience and expertise that existed within the local area. The website links detailing outcomes and further information from the Conference was being circulated. There was overall agreement that the event had presented a quality leaning opportunity for all of those who had attended.

72 Action Plan and National Updates (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 highlighted. As previously agreed, the Agreed Syllabus Review work was now included as a regular item on the Plan going forward. It was also noted that new NASACRE guidance had

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been issued on producing annual reports and that the end of December was the extended deadline for completion. In the meantime, items for the next Newsletter were also requested by the end of December for dispatch in January. It was also noted that the national 'Strictly RE' Conference had taken place and had provided another very useful source of information and material which could be developed and applied at a local level.

73 Network Updates

The co-ordination of the networks and hubs was being undertaken, for the time being, by the remaining Vice-Chair, Ruth Lawrence, and this continued to be a very useful initiative. There was discussion around types of speakers that could be brought into schools to talk about their different faiths. The arrangements for managing the practicalities of this process were explained including how support could be provided to potential contributors who were unsure about what might be expected of them and how best to deliver a presentation. A directory of SACRE approved visitors was already maintained and provided an element of 'quality assurance' but the importance of facilitating an informative but subjective style of presentation was underlined.

74 Future Meeting Dates

It was agreed that, by way of change to the date originally scheduled, the next meeting of BCP SACRE, for the Spring Term, would now take place on Tuesday 1st March 2021 at 4pm via Microsoft Teams. The Summer Term meeting remaining as originally planned on Wednesday 15th June 2022 at 4pm with the hope that this will be a face-to-face meeting.

A set of dates for the 2022/23 academic year was being discussed and would be circulated as soon as possible.

Duration of the meeting: 4.00 - 5.40 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Wednesday, 13 October 2021