

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on 15 October 2014 at 6.00pm

Present:

Committee A: Mrs S Lawson, Mrs M Shepherd, Miss A Ahmed, Mr A Shodide, Mr B Gill and Mr P Anderson

Committee B: Mr J Graham and Rev. J Guest,

Committee C: Ms A Jellicoe, Mr R Epps, Mr P Griffiths

Committee D: Councillors Gupta and Ojetola (left at 7.15)

Apologies: Dr Soleye, Mrs M Taylor, Mr D Bates, Ms H Gillman, Ms Fawell and Councillor Kerin

In attendance: Ms D Weston – Associate Adviser for Religious Education
Ms L Lloyd – School Improvement Adviser
Miss K-V Martin – Senior Democratic Services Officer

13. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, held on 16 July 2014, were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment with regards to item 11 within the minutes:

The issue of a Humanist representative on Thurrock SACRE had previously been discussed and it was recommended that a request for representation from the British Humanist Association could be considered if the same tests as applied to other faiths and belief systems were met as set out within item 15 paragraph 2.8.2 of the report.

The Chair of the Committee referred members to Page 9 of the agenda where he brought their attention to the phrase 'Pentecostal Churches' and suggested that as a committee they seek a term that is acceptable to local churches who are multicultural. This was agreed by members and the Chair of the committee confirmed that he would make enquiries.

14. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business to declare.

15. Declaration of Interests

There were no such interests declared.

16. National Religious Education Review

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education introduced the report to members of the committee explaining that the Religious Education Council of England and Wales initiated a review of RE to run in parallel with the review of the National Curriculum. The first phase of the review took place between May and December 2012, with the second phase being held in January 2013.

It was explained that a guide was offered to SACREs and launched in 2014, members were informed that the review was very successful in raising the awareness of RE.

Members asked that the recommendation stated that the committee respond to the review as the report was deferred from a previous meeting, what were members expected to agree. The Chair of the committee, explained that as he saw it, the committee were agreeing that they were happy to receive the report. The associate adviser for Religious Education informed members that Thurrock SACRE did comment at the first stage of the review.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE received the review.

17. Report on the Inquiry into the Supply of and Support of Teachers of RE in England. All Party Parliamentary Group on RE

It was explained to the committee that an inquiry was undertaken by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education to investigate the supply of and support for teachers of religious education

Members were informed that many teachers who taught RE were not actually trained within Religious Education, this meant that Headteachers were finding it difficult to employ RE teachers.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education notified the committee that following this inquiry, the government had agreed offer bursaries for training teachers within Religious Education. It was enquired as to whether the offer of bursaries was likely to have immediate effect. Members of the committee were informed that unfortunately this offer would not be in effect until 2015.

Following discussions, it was highlighted that within Catholic primary schools all teachers are expected to teach RE, training is offered and paid for by the school.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE considered the investigations in might be made to determine whether or not the findings of the report apply to Thurrock

18. Review of the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus 2009

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education introduced the report to members of the committee informing them that SACRE had statutory duties to review the agreed syllabus every 5 years. It was the associate adviser's understanding that funding for this review had already been put aside for the committee.

It was further explained that the committee firstly had to decide as to whether they were to continue with their own syllabus and suggest updates or to adopt a neighbouring authority's syllabus.

Teachers sitting on the committee stated that they were happy with the syllabus and those teaching within Academies explaining that they opted to use the Thurrock Syllabus.

It was agreed that the committee would continue with the syllabus, and by undertaking a review would consult with all schools and academies to enable an accurate update to be completed.

Members of the committee discussed the timings as stated within the appendix attached to the report. It was agreed that as the report was deferred from a previous that the new syllabus be reviewed and finalised for the beginning of the next academic year (September 2015).

It was further agreed that the date for the next meeting of the committee be amended to allow the review committee to meet at 5pm; directly before the December meeting.

RESOLVED:

That SACRE advise the Council that the syllabus is due for review and resolve to discuss the budget required for such a review

19. Academy Responses to the Local Agreed Syllabus

The Committee were advised that 80% of academies within Thurrock were following the local agreed syllabus. It was enquired as to those who were following their own syllabus, as to what they were teaching and whether they were following a syllabus from another authority.

The associate adviser for Religious Education confirmed that she would contact the academies not following the Thurrock Syllabus and seek to what they were following.

Members of the committee queried that within the appendix to the report stated that more than 10 teachers taught RE as the main part of their timetable, this was 20% of teachers teaching in an academy. It was explained that this would be within a primary academy as every teacher teaches Religious Education.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That SACRE invite all schools to allow their subject leaders to be involved in the Agreed Syllabus working group.**
- 2. That SACRE continue develop its Agreed Syllabus and to make supporting materials available to all schools in Thurrock whether or not they are academies.**
- 3. That SACRE agrees to begin the process of revising its Agreed Syllabus using the timeline in appendix 1 as a starting point but with all dates moved to 2014-15.**

20. The OFSTED Report - Realising the Potential

The report was introduced to the committee and it was explained that primary and secondary schools were experiencing similar issues.

Following discussions it was explained that Catholic Schools do teach other faiths within Religious Education, examples given were Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism. However the main focus of learning was Catholic Christianity.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That SACRE accept this report at the termly meeting.**
- 2. That SACRE agree to inform schools that the long report has been published by OfSTED.**
- 3. That SACRE advise the local authority and schools of the recommendations as included within the report**
- 4. That SACRE instruct the adviser to send a discussion document about the report to all subject leaders in Thurrock (see appendix A).**

21. Secondary Religious Education

Ms Jellicoe explained that the figures for St Clere's School for years 9, 10 and 11 were incorrect. She was explained that from year 9 Religious Education at the Academy was called Ethics and Morality and for this reason, the subject was not recorded in the data collection known as the School Census. She would ensure that her school were made aware of this.

It was explained to the committee that the information was gathered through the schools census, which was usually collected by data managers working in schools.

During discussions it was noted that although non-specialist teachers were teaching RE within schools in some cases these teachers would become specialists in RE through experience of teaching the subject.

The committee enquired as to whether it would be possible to compare the figures gathered on the level of provision in relation to specialist staff teaching the subject with other subjects such as History and Geography.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That SACRE receives this background paper and discusses the different sets of data as these become available.**
- 2. That the Chair of SACRE writes to the principal/headteacher of each of the academies concerned to:**
 - 2.1 Ask for further information and explanation about why they are not making provision for all pupils.**
 - 2.2 Draw attention to OfSTED's findings on the impact of over use of non-specialists and to ask for their comments.**
 - 2.3 Recommend that where non-specialists are being used to teach RE that those teachers be directed to attend subject specialist training.**

22. Thurrock SACRE – Secondary Religious Education

It was noticed that the report was a duplication of the previous report. The Chair therefore removed it from the agenda.

Any Other Business

The Chair of the committee asked members who would be happy to volunteer to visit schools to see how they are teaching Religious Education. It was suggested that a report be brought to the next meeting, to enable members to discuss a way forward.

This was agreed by all members of the committee.

The meeting finished at 7.45pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**