

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on 5 September 2017 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Committee A: Mrs S Lawson(arrived at 6.32), Mrs M Shepherd, Miss A Ahmend (left at 7.31) and Mr P Anderson (arrived at 6.20)

Committee B: Rev. J Guest and Rev. D Bates

Committee D: Councillor Angela Sheridan

Apologies: Mr A Kariyawasam, Rev. J Huntcherson, Ms A Jellicoe, Ms H Gillman, Dr Soley, Mrs M Taylor and Councillors Martin Kerin and Tunde Ojetola

In attendance: Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on the 19 April 2017 were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

4. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chairs

The Chair suggested that the current Chair and Vice-Chairs remain until the next meeting, as the Committee were not quorate.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair and Vice-Chair remain in place until the next meeting on 22 November 2017.

5. Monitoring of RE in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education introduced the item explaining that following the previous meeting, Members had been visiting schools in the borough to monitor how RE was taught in Thurrock Schools.

Mrs Shepherd presented back to the Committee on the two schools she had visited, Benyon Primary School and Dilkes Primary Academy. Members heard how both schools addressed the subject and the following was highlighted:

Benyon Primary School

Why did you school become involved in Excellent RE? What are your aims?

Previously RE was taught sporadically but there was a feeling in school that it was 'getting squeezed out' by other subjects. The Headteacher was very supportive of the project and RE was placed on the timetable on a weekly basis with it being known that the Senior Leadership Team would expect to see it and did not want it to get 'squeezed'. This led to an increased volume of work and better coverage.

The school follows the Agreed Syllabus and because it is part of Catalyst, they were all following the scheme of work. They felt the Agreed Syllabus ensured steady progression. There had been no cross-school moderation of work but this was possible across the Trust in the future.

R.E. work was monitored in school via 'Learning Environment' checks; planned book looks and the collection of samples of work.

The audit, carried out as part of the project, included pupil conferencing and based on the feedback from this, changes were made and they were now conducting another audit to evaluate impact. For example, the children asked for more opportunities for drama work, which was implemented.

How many staff have been involved in Excellent RE in your school so far? How?

It has now increased to all staff. The 'gap exercise' from the course led to an initial 2 staff members being involved. Mrs Gostling helped an NQT with subject knowledge and supported staff with planning, giving ideas for activities.

What did you discover from GAP task 1? (Audit of RE and SMSC in school) What has changed?

The children wanted more drama opportunities in their RE lessons as they enjoyed this when it happened.

The project had encouraged the use of open-ended questions and research.

The Subject Leader had encouraged staff to use the SACRE website and has signposted them to other sources of information.

Mrs Gostling showed Mrs Shepherd several examples of work from across the school: EYFS work on Chinese New Year; KS1 designing Islamic prayer mats, creating a model of a mosque; work on Christmas.

Staff were now using a much wider range of resources; they are using actual artefacts eg Jewish replica artefacts.

The Subject Leader took the idea of using dolls from the course SACRE video.

What have you discovered from completing the GAP task 2?

Gap task 2 led to Mrs Gostling planning with the other 2 teachers, from KS1. They gave the children a day of activities using artefacts and 'hands-on' resources which the children absolutely loved. The children were able to dress up for religious role play and this really sparked children's curiosity, so much that the children still speak about it now. Mrs Gostling showed Mrs Shepherd some wonderful video footage as well as still photographs and the children's interest and enthusiasm was clearly evident. She told me that a particularly challenging pupil so enjoyed this work that it has improved his attitude; he thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities he was given through this work. The project encouraged staff and pupils to further develop cross curricular links and teachers are now sharing their own religious artefacts, from home, with the children.

How might SACRE help you to share what you have learnt, with other schools?

Mrs Gostling is happy for SACRE to pass on any of her work and comments to others.

Mrs Gostling would be interested in supporting other schools if they needed it. She has already done some 'team teaching' in her own school.

She would like to develop an RE Subject Leaders; group or forum and perhaps share work via a website.

Dilkes Primary Academy

Why did you school become involved in Excellent RE? What are your aims?

Ms Kular wanted to attend the training because she had previously attended another Julia Diamond course and it had inspired her through techniques to make R.E. vibrant. Ms Kular felt that it's very important, especially in an area

like Thurrock, to open the minds of children through learning about a variety of religions. The course also fitted the schools aims of making learning engaging: 'Dilkes' Best Methods'. It raised the profile of RE through the year and made it important in the 'year's agenda'.

How many staff have been involved in Excellent RE in your school so far? How?

5 teachers completed the initial survey on Survey Monkey and Ms Kular felt the survey was good because it was quick and simple, however not all children completed the survey.

8 teachers have now been involved and it has really supported Ms Kular's own development. She has already completed her subject action plan for next year and this will involve all staff.

What did you discover from GAP task 1? (Audit of RE and SMSC in school) What has changed?

The audit showed that some teachers found the Agreed Syllabus too detailed; they wanted ideas on how to teach the units through quicker, 'snappier' ways in line with Dilkes' Best Methods.

It also showed that teachers were questioning their own subject knowledge and there were resource issues- resources being unused, out-dated resources and resources which were not engaging.

What have you discovered from completing the GAP task 2?

Ms Kular chose areas from the survey to improve and decided to use the RE award framework to help with this; her improvement work ran concurrently with gathering the evidence for RE award.

She realised that art and other creative activities such as dance, were lacking from their RE teaching and learning. She also felt that cross-curricular writing was affecting what was being done in RE.

She combined the evidence she needed to collect from the RE Quality with the work for the Excellence in RE project and gave much more emphasis to different aspects of experiencing and recording RE, than just writing. She also encouraged more debate and discussion and felt that during the course of the project, children became more open minded and willing to engage in RE. She said that there was an increase in display work on RE across the school and children became more enthusiastic and readily engaged with the assessor for the Quality Mark.

Dilkes were awarded the Silver Quality Mark.

How might SACRE help you to share what you have learnt, with other schools?

Ms Kular is happy to share what she has learnt. She would like SACRE's help with creating a 'bank of people of different faiths who would be happy to visit schools to talk about their faith. She felt it was more powerful for the children when people they didn't know ie not their own teachers, spoke to them about their faith. She would be happy to visit other schools to talk about being a Sikh.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education notified Members that SACRE had a legal duty to monitor provision for Religious Education in its local area where RE was delivered in accordance with the Local Agreed Syllabus.

She continued to explain Thurrock introduced a new Agreed Syllabus in 2016 and it would now seem timely to carry out a monitoring exercise to establish how effective the new syllabus had been in meeting its aim to raise standards of RE.

Members were spilt into groups to discuss the draft pro-forma at appendix 1. During discussions the following was raised:

- The form was straight forward and simple to answer;
- May require reformatting such as the layout, use of different fonts and the type of language used needed to be consistent;
- Answers may be different depending on whether the school was Primary or Secondary.

RESOLVED that SACRE Members:

- 1. Discussed the draft proforma at appendix 1 and suggested revisions.**
- 2. Authorised a pilot monitoring programme that might be reviewed in the summer term meeting**

6. Collective Worship

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education remarked SACRE had a legal duty to monitor provision for collective worship in schools in its local area.

Members were advised collective worship was an area which many schools found challenging both on practical and philosophical level. They were further notified the report aimed to stimulate a discussion between Members in the hope that some support might be offered to schools.

During discussions Members commented that many schools struggled to meet the need of collective worship every day and it lacked after primary school. It was discussed that schools required extra time to be able to do something meaningful

within collective worship, at the same time as it being different to RE.

It was commented that teachers were not trained to teach collective worship and so many of them were not sure how to offer collective worship to children. Members further stated that children needed an opportunity to worship and reflect if they wish too.

Members heard that Holy Cross Primary School had a pray garden, which was inspired by a school trip to Aylesford, where children completed the Rosary Walk. Following a trip with a Year 6 class the children asked if they could have their own peace garden.

The children created their garden with stones painted with word such as Love and Peace, running water, the sun, moon, stars to represent Gods garden a mission statement and benches with cushions. It was commented that the garden meant a lot to the children as it gave them somewhere to go and reflect.

The Committee continued their discussions by mentioning it was important for children to have time to reflect or to have time to sit and have a thought for the day within Schools. It was further commented that collective worship could be made enjoyable and not a subject that was durable.

RESOLVED that SACRE Members:

- 1. Discuss the issues raised by the NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) presentation**
- 2. Agreed on what support schools might need that SACRE might offer**

The meeting finished at 7.40 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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