

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on 9 January 2019 at 6.00 pm

- Committee A:** Mrs S Lawson, Mr P Anderson, Mrs M Shepherd, Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Mr T Ojetola and Mr A Kariyawasam
- Committee B:** Rev. J Guest
- Committee C:** Ms J Culloty, and Mrs R Gedalovitch
- Committee D:** Councillor Martin Kerin, Ms A Winstone
- Apologies:** Ms A Harris
- In Attendance:** Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education, Tisha Sutcliffe, Democratic Service Officer
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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.

17. Apologies for Absence

18. Minutes

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education Committee meetings held on 18 July 2018 and 17 October 2018 were approved as a correct record.

19. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Integrated Communities

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report, and the Committee discussed the recent headlines in the newspapers regarding "parents removing their children from Religious Education lessons". This raised concerns for Members as the original report did not refer to this information.

Mr Anderson stated that the newspapers should have used accurate figures. The Committee asked if the press had released a response and Ms Winstone confirmed that they had.

Mrs Shephard mentioned that when she was a Head teacher, her school had lots of children from black and ethnic minority backgrounds and parents would often choose to remove their children from Religious Education lessons which discussed Islam, despite parents being made aware that lessons on Islam would be taught when accepting a school place. She felt that by teaching Islam the schools attempted to broaden children's views.

Mrs Shephard also commented that during her visit on behalf of SACRE to two local schools in Thurrock, she was made aware they had achieved REQM at Silver level and the second school were also working towards it at the time of the visit.

Mrs Gedalovitch stated she had witnessed children removing themselves from Religious Education lessons, although Members agreed children were happy to learn and would ask questions if they found something challenging.

The Committee felt social media had a large impact on why parents were making these decisions.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Requested for an item be placed in the Head teachers' Bulletin**
- 2. Reminded schools of their statutory duty to promote community cohesion**
- 3. Requested schools share evidence of good practice that might be circulated to others as examples of how Religious Education supports this work.**
- 4. Sent a delegation of children from their school to a SACRE Youth Conference: 'Respect for all' on Wednesday, 5th June at Thurrock Adult Community College, Richmond Rd, Grays RM17 6DN**
- 5. Conducted an investigation into the nature and extent of pupils being withdrawn from religious education or part thereof**

22. Youth Cabinet - Verbal Update

Two individuals from Youth Cabinet attended the meeting to discuss their experiences during Youth Cabinet.

The Associate Advisor asked questions regarding their experiences in Religious Education lessons during primary and secondary school. They felt that in primary school the Religious Education lessons were limited and would focus on watching TV programmes. They went on to state that in secondary

school they felt they had learnt more regarding different cultures, which they had found more interesting to learn about.

During Religious Education in secondary schools they related their personal experiences of visiting a church after Christmas. They commented that they both now enjoyed doing Religious Education and found it an interesting subject as it related to real life scenarios and everyday life.

The Committee then asked questions around what their current school had to offer to students during exams, such as relaxation rooms or other incentives. The Youth Cabinet members said they were unaware of any incentives that were available to them.

The Committee asked if the students agreed for Religious Education to be taught in schools, which they both agreed with as they felt it was teaching students about different cultures.

23. The new OfSTED Framework Consultation - Verbal Update

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education informed the Committee meeting that as the new OfSTED Framework Consultation had not yet been published, it was not to be discussed during the meeting.

24. Monitoring Provision for Religious Education in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report and updated the Committee as only a few schools had responded.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Collected the information to date (December 2018)**
- 2. Learnt from these responses**
- 3. Considered what action might be necessary to collect more responses**

25. Annual Report 2017 - 2018

26. Work Programme

The Committee discussed the work programme for the new municipal year and stated that there were no changes to be made.

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