

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 16 June 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Committee A: Mrs R Saul, Ms H Kaur, Mr T Ojetola and Mr Kariyawasam Martin Kerin

Committee B: Mr P Anderson, Mrs L Fry and Mrs L Olajide

Committee C: Ms D Webster and Mrs C Pumfrey

Committee D: Councillor Martin Kerin

Apologies: Ms J Culloty, Ms A Jellicoe, Councillor Gary Collins and Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 6 January 2021 were approved as a correct record subject

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chairs

Nominations were invited for the appointment of Chair of the Committee. It was proposed by Mr Ojetola and seconded by Councillor Kerin, that Mr Anderson be appointed and remain as Chair of the Committee.

Nominations were invited for the appointment of Vice Chair of Committees A, B, C and D.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. That Mr P Anderson be appointed as Chair of Thurrock SACRE.**

2. The following members be elected as Vice Chairs:

Committee A: Mr T Ojetola
Committee B: Mr P Anderson
Committee C: Ms J Culloty
Committee D: Councillor Collins

5. Reviewing the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education presented the report explaining every Local Authority was required to establish and support an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). She advised the last review was undertaken in 2016 and the current Agreed Syllabus was approved.

During discussions members were advised a survey was to be circulated to all schools for teachers to give their views on the current document which had been taught within Thurrock schools and the ASC would form the same four committees as SACRE.

Mr Anderson, Chair of SACRE proposed that members formed the ASC this was seconded by Councillor Kerin. SACRE agreed to form the Agreed Syllabus Conference for the remaining of Item 6.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education explained the options open to SACRE were:

- A. To renew the license with RE Today which included a supplement to insert into the current syllabus (2016/2021) this would be circulated electronically to schools following the Agreed Syllabus.
- B. That SACRE could adopt RE Today's most recent syllabus model B
- C. SACRE could commission a bespoke new Agreed Syllabus with assistance from RE today.

During discussions it was clarified the ASC were not required to choose a particular option to move forward with at this meeting however were to discuss the pros and cons with regards to each option. It was commented that within option A the update would include an expanded SEND guidance, revised and re-written guidance on assessments, and local demographic information in relation to Key Stage 3 units such as Islam, SIKHI and Buddhism.

It was noted for option B the syllabus would include some of the key updates from option A, and was created in 2017 by RE Today as a new syllabus

model. Members heard that some of the questions included were very similar to the current syllabus however its approach was slightly different.

Option C could fulfil statutory duties by requiring a full local review of the agreed syllabus and would include a process such as setting up the agreed syllabus conference, serving teachers, receiving an initial draft by the Associate for Religious Education, approval by SACRE and the Local Authority and finally receiving a final copy of the syllabus in either a paper or online version.

Members of SACRE queried as to the cost of the license if they were mindful to adopt the syllabus from RE Today. The Associate Advisor for a Religious Education explained the license included permission for each local school to use the syllabus, hardcopies of the syllabus support document supplied as PDF to each school and the Local Authority. It was noted the syllabus itself would remain the copyright of RE Today. Members further heard there was a cost between £20,000 and £30,000 should they be mindful to write a new bespoke syllabus. The Associate Advisor for Religious Education highlighted the potential timeline for the ASC and this was noted and agreed by members.

During discussions members sought confirmation if they were to choose option A whether it be possible to create a 'wish list' for teachers following the survey, as to topics or help they may like to be included with regards to the syllabus and or any supporting guidance. It was observed as to whether it would be possible to modify the syllabus to suit schools individually with regards to them being either Academies or Local Authority Schools.

SACRE were advised by the Associate Advisor that depending on the option RE Today would draft the document in the first instance for SACRE to review and this would include any modifications.

RESOLVED that SACRE Members:

- 1. Convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference**
- 2. Agree to begin the process of reviewing the agreed syllabus by conducting a survey of teachers**
- 3. Agree the proposed timeline**
- 4. Consider some of the options for the review presented in Appendix 1 from RE Today and the supplemental pdf (model b)**

At 7:12 pm Mr Ojetola as Vice-Chair of Committee A took the role of Chair as Mr Anderson had technical difficulties.

6. GCSE entries and results in Thurrock 2020

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education explained the report compared GCSE entries and results for - Studies with national data and explored the extent to which the trends for schools in Thurrock reflects those nationally.

During discussions members commented they felt the Council didn't promote Religious Education within schools enough for example some schools were not teaching the faith of Sikhi.

Mr Anderson returned to the meeting at 7:25 pm and returned to the role of Chair.

It was observed by Ms Olajide she felt primary Religious Education was used as a filler subject unless the school was a faith school, as they did not see Religious Education as an important subject, she continued by stating it was important for children to learn about Religious Education from an early age.

SACRE noted that 74% of Thurrock children were achieving a grade of 9-4 of those entered to the full course, this was 78% nationally and the average attainment eight score of all pupils of a 1 or 2 grade was 48% compared to 50% nationally.

It was highlighted that Thurrock appeared in position 49 out of 150 local authorities when ranked according to entries for GCSE Religious Studies. The highest ranked authority entered 77% and the lowest 11%. The average point score for all subjects in Thurrock Schools is around 2 points (half a GCSE grade) lower than the national average. The Chair observed that pupils entering a full course at GCSE was at 25% for Thurrock compared to 39% nationally.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Informs school leaders, multi-academy trusts and governors about the findings of this research and**
- 2. Requests that they consider how the study of Religious Education as part of a broad and balanced curriculum appears to have an impact on pupil attainment overall.**

Mr Ojetola left the meeting at 7.36pm

7. Ofsted Research Review on Religious Education 2021

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education explained the report related to the new education inspection framework from OFSTED and highlighted the findings of OFSTED in the review into what constituted high quality artery within schools.

During discussions it was commented the review recognised there was no single way of teaching high-level religious education and furthermore it highlighted some common features;

- The curriculum was well sequenced to sure the peoples left knowledge they needed for later topics;
- There was consideration of when people should relate the context to that own personal knowledge;
- It was felt there was adequate time given to religious education for RE leaders to deliver an ambitious curriculum, and
- There was also significant training and professional development for teachers to have an appropriate subject professional knowledge.

Mr Anderson touched on the topic of weak framing and how the RE curriculum was classified was perhaps an indication of the extent to how a school prioritised Religious Education, an example of this was when RE was taught within PSHE or alongside other subjects which would limit the curriculum pupils could learn.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Agree to share information about the key findings of this review with Headteachers, Governors and multi-academy trusts and some excerpts to stimulate discussion.**

8. Any Other Business

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education updated SACRE with regards to the spirited art competition, it was explained that five members of SACRE had returned their marking forms and there was only one week until the competition closed. She continued by asking if SACRE members could return their markings of the artwork submitted by children across the borough. MR Kariyawasam explained he had collated a form to be able to mark the artwork and offered to circulate this via Democratic Services to all members. It was agreed to extend the deadline for one week to Friday 25th June to allow members of SACRE to submit their markings.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education wanted to offer her thanks to Sue Lamkin for all of her help and assistance with making the spirited art competition successful.

The meeting finished at 8.05 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**