

North Yorkshire County Council

Children and Young People’s Service

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Minutes of a meeting held at the Evolution Business Centre, Northallerton, on Thursday, 30th January 2020

PRESENT:

Olivia Seymour – Chair (Church of England);
 Professor John Adams (Humanist), Barbara Belsham (Methodist), Reverend Simone Bennett (Church of England), Nasr Moussa Emam (Muslim), Margaret Gibson (Church of England), Hannah Harrison (Teacher), County Councillor Robert Heseltine, Hazel Hornsby (Catholic), County Councillor Janet Jefferson, Bill Kimberling (The Church of St. Jesus of Latter-Day Saints), County Councillor Andrew Lee, County Councillor Patrick Mulligan, Dr. Neville Packter (Judaism), Douglas Rice-Bowen (Teacher), Helen Sellers (Baptist), County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson

Officers: Katharine Bruce (Senior Education Adviser, Children and Young People’s Service), Patrick Duffy (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Daniel Harry (Democratic Services Manager)

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185.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Mrs Judy Clarke (Teacher) and Mohinder Singh Chana (Sikhism).</p>	
186	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <p>That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19th September, 2019 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:-</p> <p>Under Minute No. 177, Matters Arising (i) Agreed Syllabus, in the paragraph commencing “Professor John Adams” delete the words that appear after “other errors” so that the paragraph now reads “Professor John Adams expressed disappointment that the finalised syllabus remained strewn with spelling and grammatical errors and other errors.”</p>	Patrick Duffy
187.	<p>MATTERS ARISING:</p> <p>a) <u>Minute No. 177, Religious Education</u> The Chair advised that she had picked up with RE Today the concerns raised by Professor Adams as to the grammatical and other errors. She hoped that by the next meeting a corrected document would be on the website.</p>	

	<p>It was not possible to change the printed version of the document at this stage.</p> <p>Professor Adams reiterated his concern about this matter and Nasr Moussa Emam expressed his support for this view.</p> <p>b) <u>Minute 180: SACRE Self-Evaluation and Members Skills Audit: Identifying Priorities for 2019/20</u> The Chair advised that that this had been sent to Members and the comments received taken on board. She and the Vice-Chair had drafted a Development Plan for initial discussion and consideration later on the Agenda for today's meeting (See Minute No.192, below).</p>	
188.	<p>CHANGES IN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY – LOCAL AUTHORITY ADVISORY ROLE</p> <p>The Chair updated Members on the situation, following Rebecca Swift having left her role with the County Council.</p> <p>Rebecca had undertaken both the Local Authority and Religious Education Adviser aspects of the role. It was still unclear who would be undertaking the Academic Role but Katharine Bruce, Senior Education Adviser, Children and Young People's Service, would be responsible for the Local Authority element.</p> <p>Daniel Harry, Democratic Services Manager, stated that he was clear that SACRE should receive the same level of support as any other Committee of the County Council. Continuity of service was required to enable SACRE to fulfil its role. Therefore, he and the Chair would meet with Judith Kirk, Assistant Director, Education and Skills, to stress this point and discussions would continue, as required.</p> <p>The Chair added that she had sent the Job Description for the Religious Education Adviser part of the role and other background information to the Local Authority, so that they are aware what the role entails.</p> <p>Members made the following points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even when Rebecca Swift was in post, supporting SACRE was only one aspect of her role. She could not solely focus on SACRE. • This SACRE requires support and consistency. Could representations be made to the County Council itself? In response, County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson commented that all five of the Council's appointed representatives were present at today's meeting. They would have regard to the points made and feedback. • It is a statutory requirement for a Council with education responsibilities to have a SACRE, with membership from the "four Committees" (Christian denominations and other faith 	

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	<p>groups representative of the area; the Church of England; Teacher Associations; and the Local Authority).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Authority role is a crucial link between SACRE and the County Council. • Is there a lack of understanding about the statutory role of SACRE? • The partnership between the Local Authority and Community Representatives is important. • There should be money available to support SACRE, as the resource is devolved. • It would be helpful to have clarification as to what support the Local Authority has to provide. Daniel Harry undertook to find this out and inform Members. <p>In response to a question from Dr. Neville Packter, the Chair said she would be unpicking the criteria for the Local Authority role/support with the County Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED -</p> <p>That the support that a Local Authority is obliged to provide to a SACRE be ascertained and circulated to Members.</p>	Daniel Harry
189.	<p>SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19</p> <p>Considered –</p> <p>A draft of the SACRE Annual Report for 2018/19. A draft had been circulated with the papers and, subsequent to that, a “glossier” version had been emailed to Members.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that, although the document was at the printers, there was still opportunity for it to be amended.</p> <p>There was a discussion and the following points were made, in particular:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor John Adams commented that there was no indication given as to the attendance of individuals. He felt this information should be included, as is the case with the Annual Reports of many other public sector organisations. • The Chair mentioned that the Annual Report does now give numbers on the Committee. She proposed that, from next year, SACRE consider the report at an earlier meeting to help shape the content • Helen Sellers pointed out the following inaccuracies:- 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Section 2: Advice to Statutory Bodies:</i> The timescale of the agreed syllabus is incorrect - it is shown as only being for one year. The correct dates need to be checked and this aspect amended. - <i>Page 8, paragraph 3, line:</i> The word "of" has been omitted. • Helen Sellers added that it would be good practice for Members to share a copy with their nominating body electronically. • The Annual Report needed a rethink going forward; it should be an opportunity to celebrate some of the great work that is being undertaken in schools. In its current format, it is unlikely that busy people are going to make time to read it. • It would be worthwhile looking at other Annual Reports to pick out the best practice from these and there should be more said about how we are trying to tackle the issue of academies. On this point, County Councillor Janet Jefferson advised that the County Council's Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recently discussed how to deal with academies, so the County Council was aware of this. • It was confirmed that the data is published data. • With regard to the drop off in numbers and the statement that some schools were failing in their duty, are any of these schools in North Yorkshire? The Chair responded that she had asked for information on a school-by-school basis. Therefore, this information would be available in future. • Part of the reason for the fall in the number of pupils taking Religious Education can be attributed to the subject not being included in the English Baccalaureate. • Section 5 is extremely brief. There is widespread non-compliance of schools with collective worship. The Chair responded that more information on this could be built into the Annual Report in future but we need to ascertain what the schools value and do not value in terms of collective worship. • It is not the role of SACRE to change the law. Prayer is an invitational opportunity; children are not forced to pray. • Prayer need not just be through words. • Schools have a responsibility to consider the spiritual development of pupils. <p>The Chair concluded the discussion by saying that the issue of non-compliance could be revisited as part of SACREs responsibilities.</p>	
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	<p>She also confirmed that the Annual Report had previously been sent to Members for comment and it now needed to be signed off.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <p>a) That the Annual Report for 2018/19 be approved, subject to the following amendments:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Section 2: Advice to Statutory Bodies: The timescale of the agreed syllabus is incorrect. It is shown as only being for one year. The correct dates need to be checked and this aspect amended. - Page 8, paragraph 3, line 1: The word "of" has been omitted. The sentence should read "<i>The teaching of multi-faith RE...</i>" <p>b) That, for future Annual Reports:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - build in more information about Collective Worship, particularly around any non-compliance issues; - take the opportunity to celebrate some of the good work in schools; and - include more detail about how SACRE is trying to tackle the issue of academies. <p>c) That SACRE consider future draft Annual Reports as an Agenda Item at the summer meeting, so as to be able to inform the draft at an early stage.</p>	<p>Adrian Clarke</p> <p>Adrian Clarke</p> <p>Adrian Clarke Sally Mitchell</p>
<p>190</p>	<p>VARIATION OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS</p> <p>The Chair decided to vary the order of the business on the Agenda by moving back the Item on GCSE and 'A' Level Data (See Minute No. 193) as this was to be presented by Katharine Bruce, who would not be able to join the meeting until later in the afternoon, due to a long-standing commitment in Scarborough.</p>	
<p>191</p>	<p>NEW OFSTED FRAMEWORK AND THE PLACE OF SACRE</p> <p>Considered –</p> <p>A paper by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) entitled <i>What are Ofsted Inspectors saying about Religious Education? – The first 101 reports that mention RE.</i></p> <p>The Chair introduced this Item by stressing the importance of SACRE being aware of what Inspectors are saying, in view of its statutory responsibility to monitor standards in Religious Education.</p> <p>Religious Education was being looked at in some detail and the outcome of the Inspectors findings were affecting the judgment received by schools.</p>	

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	<p>She suggested that the Ofsted Reports for North Yorkshire Schools and any specific concerns arising from these should be a Standing Item on Agendas for SACRE. In this way, good work could be celebrated and this would highlight where further work was required.</p> <p>It was noted that the reports would not include Catholic or Voluntary-Aided Schools.</p> <p>Members made the following points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Authority Officer should be briefed as to how the data should be shared. • It would be helpful to see reports where there has been non-compliance with collective worship and non-compliance for Religious Education at Key Stage 4. • Quality is key; how can we build links between schools with outstanding provision and those where provision is not as strong. The intention should be to foster collaborative work, and support schools where standards in Religious Education are identified as needing improvement. • It would be worth reporting where schools have performed excellently so that other schools can be signposted to gain support. Going forward, the REQ Mark should be considered by schools with excellent practice. <p>RESOLVED –</p> <p><i>That Ofsted Reports for North Yorkshire Schools and any particular concerns arising from these be a Standing Item on the Agenda.</i></p> <p>NOTE: The discussions will also be used to consider how links can be built between schools with outstanding provision and those where provision is not as strong.</p>	<p>Katharine Bruce Sally Mitchell</p>
<p>192.</p>	<p>DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SACRE</p> <p>Considered –</p> <p>A draft Development Plan, tabled by the Chair and Vice-Chair.</p> <p>The Chair introduced this Item and stated that it stemmed from the SACRE Self-Evaluation: Identifying Priorities for 2019/20, which Members had been asked to comment on.</p> <p>Any comments received from Members had been taken on board. She and the Vice-Chair had worked together on the draft and looked at what a number of other SACREs are doing. They had also viewed self-evaluation by other SACREs to attempt to identify what might be relevant priorities for the North Yorkshire SACRE.</p> <p>It was important to ensure engagement with academies as well as schools.</p>	

Action

She then took Members through the draft, outlining the rationale behind each suggested priority, before asking them to discuss the draft for ten minutes informally, amongst themselves, during a brief interlude.

On reconvening, the following points were made:-

- The language needs to be consistent in terms of officers titles when further information is known as to who will be supporting the SACRE.
- We need to be clear we want to engage with academies as well as schools.
- Are these are the right priorities for us? Perhaps we should look at including SIAMS data and include denominational schools in the sharing of best practice. It is about getting the most accurate picture of North Yorkshire schools, based on all of the data available.
- There is the equivalence of good Religious Education teaching in every type of school.
- Some training for Members is required, as well as attendance at Conferences, as it would be useful to hear national messages. What is the budget for this? The Chair said she was attempting to find this out in her discussions with the Local Authority.
- The Chair clarified that the priorities were not in any way hierarchical. The Plan needs to recognise and utilise the skills of the individuals that comprise SACRE. Meeting with schools and making presentations to them would bring the document “to life.”
- Given the size of North Yorkshire and calls on people’s time, so as to try to maximise attendance at meetings, we should look into the possibility of skyping/video calling into meetings, when required. Daniel Harry said he would be happy to look into this and that he was aware of two or three venues which offered this facility. He did caution, however, that with Council Meetings Members had to physically be in attendance in order to take part in the discussion and vote and it could be that a similar requirement operated for SACRE Members.

The Chair concluded the discussion by confirming that she would circulate the revised Plan for comment, in advance of the next Agenda circulation, with the intention that it be approved at the next meeting.

RESOLVED –

- a) That, when the position is clearer regarding Local Authority support, the terminology be made consistent (e.g. Local Authority Adviser/Local Authority Officer).

Chair

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	<p>b) That under Priority 1, Action 2, it be made clear that engagement will be with academies as well as schools.</p> <p>c) That under Priority 1 Action 3, the feasibility of including SIAMS data be examined and denominational schools be included in the sharing of best practice.</p> <p>d) That under Priority 2, add as an action: <i>To reassess the form of the Annual Report.</i></p> <p>e) That liaison take place with the Local Authority link (when this person is confirmed) to work up a revised draft Plan, based on the above comments.</p> <p>f) That the revised draft be circulated for comment, in advance of the next Agenda circulation, with the intention that it be reviewed and agreed at the next meeting.</p> <p>g) That under Priority 2, Action 3, in order to facilitate regular attendance at meetings, examine the possibility of Members being able to skype/video call into meetings, when required.</p>	<p>Chair</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>Chair and Daniel Harry</p> <p>Sally Mitchell</p> <p>Daniel Harry</p>
193.	<p>GCSE and 'A' LEVEL DATA</p> <p>Considered –</p> <p>A tabled document - North Yorkshire GCSE and 'A' Level Data Report, January 2020.</p> <p>The data outlined performance of North Yorkshire students in Religious Education at Key Stage 4 GCSE and Post-16 'A' Level, compared to performance nationally.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Katharine Bruce. As mentioned at the start of the meeting, Katharine had been appointed as the Local Authority Adviser.</p> <p>Prior to taking Members through the report, Katharine Bruce outlined her background, which included having worked for the County Council since 2001 in School Improvement Adviser roles (both primary and secondary) and holding a safeguarding portfolio, which also now links into the Prevention Strategy (preventing children and young people from being drawn into terrorism.)</p> <p>Her background was rooted in School Improvement, which she hoped would be helpful to SACRE. She had also been an Ofsted Inspector.</p> <p>Katharine added that she was keen to carry out the Local Authority role, utilising all her experience. She recognised the importance of the Local Authority role and would do what she could, via her channels, to help progress this.</p> <p>The paper comprised seven Appendices, namely:-</p>	

- Appendix 1 GCSE Religious Studies Overview (FFT) 3
- Appendix 2 GCSE Religious Studies Attainment and Progress (FFT) 4
- Appendix 3 GCSE Religious Studies Individual School Performance Summary (FFT) 5
- Appendix 4 GCSE Religious Studies KS4 Pupil Groups Performance (FFT) 6
- Appendix 5 Key Stage 5 Religious Studies Overview (FFT) 7
- Appendix 6 Key Stage 5 Religious Studies School Performance Summary (FFT) 8
- Appendix 7 Key Stage 5 Religious Studies Pupil Groups Performance (FFT)

Katharine highlighted the following aspects:-

Key Stage 4

- Pupils are attaining significantly above the national average.
- Attainment over time at KS4 has dipped a little, but remains significantly above the national average.
- Progress is broadly in line with the national average, but our ambition should be to exceed the national average.
- There has been increase in the number of students taking Religious Education – 283 more entries than in 2018, which reverses the falling trend of recent years.
- Nationally, there has been a reduction in the numbers of students taking short course GCSE in Religious Studies – for clarification, short course GCSE Religious Studies is still available as an option.
- There are wide variations in attainment and achievement.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not making the progress in Religious Education that their peers are.
- The lowest attainers are *mobile* pupils, that is, pupils who change school part way through the school year.

Post-16 'A' Level

- In the absence of nationally validated data at the time of writing, it is estimated, on the basis of interim data, that North Yorkshire's GCSE 'A' Level outcomes are significantly above the national average and the average point score of 36, is considered significantly above the national average of 34 points.
- There is still wide variation in outcomes between schools and pupil groups.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">- There are some factors around curriculum time and delivery e.g. a lack of specialist Religious Education Teachers.- There has been an increase in number of boys taking Religious Education at 'A' Level.- Some elements of the data need to be treated with care, including low numbers of entries. For example, in one school sixth form there was just one pupil entered. <p>Douglas Rice-Bowen referred to performance of pupils receiving Free Schools Meals and asked if there was a particular issue in Religious Education i.e. was there a differential in performance compared to other subjects? Katharine advised that this was on a par with other subjects for this vulnerable group.</p> <p>Katharine advised that where there is significant under achievement in Religious Studies there is scope for this to be identified in School Improvement Adviser termly visits/conversations.</p> <p>The Chair felt that it would be helpful for future reports to have information, by school, as to the number of pupils entered for Religious Studies and an indication as to what pupils who are not taking Religious Education are doing in respect of following an accredited course.</p> <p>She added that termly visits to schools would be helpful. How this could be best achieved would need to be the subject of a separate discussion.</p> <p>The Chair expressed her gratitude to Katharine Bruce for the assistance that she had provided to her in recent weeks.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) That the data be noted.b) That the Committee place on record its thanks to Katharine Bruce for the help and support she has provided in a short time.c) That future updates include more information on individual schools and, if they are not entering candidates for public examinations in Religious Studies, information as to what the pupils are doing in terms of following an accredited course.d) That the data be revisited at the next meeting as part of consideration of the Development Plan (see Minute No. 192, above).	<p>Katharine Bruce</p> <p>Katharine Bruce Sally Mitchell</p>
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194.	<p>TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS</p> <p>The Chair stated that, as part of the discussions with the Local Authority, she would seek clarity as to who will provide this and how.</p> <p>Workshops would continue to be held and the Annual Conference would be on Curriculum Conversation in Religious Education, with national speakers planned.</p>	Chair
195.	<p>NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SACRE CONFERENCE</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Termly Briefing had just been released.</p> <p>Nasr Moussa Emam indicated that he would like to continue to represent the SACRE on the National Association, adding that representation enhances the role of the SACRE.</p> <p>The Chair said that she was waiting to hear of the budget available for a Member, or Members, of North Yorkshire SACRE to attend this year's Annual Conference in London.</p> <p>RESOLVED –</p> <p>That, dependent on confirmation as to the budget provision, the Chair liaise with the Clerk with regard to booking a place/places at the National Association of SACRE Conference.</p>	Chair Sally Mitchell
196.	<p>CORRESPONDENCE</p> <p>There had been no correspondence received since the last meeting.</p>	
197.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>There was some discussion about the possibility of changing the date for the next meeting as some Members would not be able to attend.</p> <p>On balance, however, it was agreed to keep the date as Thursday 21st May 2020, at the Cairn Hotel, Harrogate, commencing at 4.00 p.m. on the basis that this was a generally good fit and any other date chosen would, similarly, not be convenient to all Members.</p>	ALL TO NOTE
198	<p>OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>On this occasion, there was no other business.</p>	

The meeting concluded at 4.00 p.m.

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