

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Tuesday 1st February 2022 at 3.00 p.m.

Group A: Christian Denominations and such other religious denominations as, in the Authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area:
Helen Sellers, Chair (Baptist), Professor John Adams (Humanist), Mohinder Singh Chana (Sikh), Chris Devanny (Catholic) and Bill Kimberling (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)

Group B: Church of England: Reverend Simone Bennett and Gill Simpson (Diocese of Leeds) and Philippa Boulding (Diocese of York)

Group C: Teachers Associations: Tara Askew
NOTE: Stuart Anslow attended the training that preceded the meeting

Group D: Local Authority: County Councillors Andrew Lee, Patrick Mulligan and Annabel Wilkinson

Officers present: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Patrick Duffy (Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer) and Olivia Seymour (Professional Religious Education Adviser)

In attendance: Liz Roodhouse, in connection with Minute No. 287

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

282. Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed people to the meeting and mentioned that Members had just spent an hour together, as part of their regular training. This had been led by the Professional Religious Education Adviser.

For the benefit of any members of the public or the media viewing the broadcast, the Chair advised that the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education is a Statutory Committee established by the Local Authority.

She added that its main function is to advise and support the Local Authority on matters related to Religious Education for Schools that follow the locally Agreed Syllabus and on Collective Worship.

Four Groups are represented on SACRE:-

- Group A – Christian Denominations and such other religious denominations that reflect the principal religious traditions in the area
- Group B – The Church of England
- Group C – Teacher and Head Teacher Associations
- Group D – The Local Authority

The Membership of SACRE is on the back of the Agenda for today's meeting and the papers for this meeting had been published in advance on the County Council's website.

Members then introduced themselves.

The Chair welcomed Liz Roodhouse, from Craven Development Education Centre, who would be speaking to us and advised that Mr. Brian Berry had been appointed as the Jewish Representative on the Committee. He had hoped to be able to join today, but we will formally welcome him at the next meeting.

She advised that she sits on SACRE as a representative of the Yorkshire and Northern Baptist Associations. The other Members then introduced themselves.

283. Minutes of last meeting

The Chair thanked County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson for having taken the Chair at the last meeting, when she had been unable to attend.

She added that she had viewed the recording of the meeting and, for accuracy, the reference to *School Inspection Team* in Minute No. 277, Update by the Local Authority, should read *School Improvement Team*.

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendment referred to in the preceding paragraph.

284 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

285 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from County Councillors Robert Heseltine and Janet Jefferson, Stuart Anslow (Teacher Representative), Brian Berry (Jewish) Sian Henderson (Methodist) and Nasr Moussa Emam (Muslim).

286. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

287 Craven Development Education Centre

Considered –

A presentation by Liz Roodhouse, Volunteer Co-ordinator at the Centre.

Liz advised Members that the Centre, based in Skipton, is one of 23 Development Education Centres in England

It is a small Charity, whose Mission is to bring Global Learning into the classroom.

She works primarily with Teachers, to support them and, sometimes, with young people.

Global Learning explores what connects us with the rest of the World and helps learners imagine different futures and the role they can play in creating a fairer and sustainable World.

It is a way of approaching any subject area; applies to all ages; and can be the golden thread for a School.

She outlined the facilities at the Centre, which include an extensive range of resources. These are all free, with the exception of a very popular box - *Be a Cocoa Farmer for a Day*, which allows Teachers to use role play to take pupils on a journey from being a Cocoa Bean to a Chocolate Farmer.

Advice and support is also available for Teachers to help them undertake activities outside of the classroom. For example, she recently arranged, via Zoom, a Fair Trade Session for School Teachers, providing them with links to useful resources, ahead of Fair Trade Fortnight.

She works for the British Council, on Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning. This enables her to work for the Centre in a voluntary capacity. As a local Adviser for the Programme, she was involved in leading Supported Partnerships of five UK Schools and five in another country/continent - in her case Africa. The focus was to get Schools to work together on the Climate Crisis. They came up with solutions and ideas. To assist the process, an issues tree was used whereby:-

- the roots represented the causes of the problem;
- the problem itself was on the trunk;
- the branches signified the effect of the problem; and
- the leaves/fruit denoted the solutions and actions

Everyone's perceptions were challenged and friendships formed.

She is proud of the Global Teaching Award – a nationally recognised qualification which affords Teachers the abilities and confidence to embed Global Learning into the curriculum and life of their School.

The aim of Global Learning is to develop:-

- skills and values;
- an openness to new ideas;
- commitment to peace and sustainable living;
- belief that we can make a difference;
- skills such as empathy and critical thinking;

...and also to challenge injustice and inequality; and value and respect for diversity.

Professor John Adams asked to what extent Religious Education infuses the work that is done. The Chair remarked that the resources are wide ranging. They are not particularly Religious Education focused, but Religious Education Teachers could use these when looking at the wider issues of diversity, community and ethics. Global issues overlap with many Religious Education interests. She recommended that Members take a look at the website, which is a useful resource:-
www.cravendec.org.uk

Reverend Simone Bennett advised that when she had been a Head Teacher in the Skipton area, her School had regularly used the resources and these were always well received. They give Schools access to resources that they would not be able to afford on their own.

In response to questions from Mohinder Singh Chana, Liz advised further as to how the Centre is funded and confirmed that each of the 23 Centres operate as a Charity and are linked together

The Chair thanked Liz for her presentation and said that Items such as this are part of broadening the links of SACRE and seeing the place of Religious Education in the whole Curriculum.

NOTED.

288. Update by the Professional Religious Education Adviser – Olivia Seymour

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, informing Members of work undertaken since the last meeting.

The report provided details on the following issues:-

- Training
- SACRE Newsletter
- NATRE Secondary Religious Education Survey
- Kim Leadbeater, MP for Batley and Spen – Parliamentary Question on what assessment the Department For Education has made of the societal value for young people of Religious Education and the response from the Government

With regard to training, the Professional Religious Education Adviser highlighted the following:-

- It continues online. This has been a challenge, but Schools have been able to continue to access support and training.
- The numbers for Primary Schools accessing training are increasing.
- Planned training will be connected across each term, taking defined sessions from Ofsted Research Reviews.
- Practical Workbooks have been provided for Teachers to take back to their Schools.
- The autumn term focused on Leadership and Curriculum Leadership. This term, the focus is on assessment.
- The challenge remains in the Secondary Sector but, increasingly, requests are being received for assistance from individual Schools, which is encouraging.

Within her report, a link has been provided to the NATRE Secondary Religious Education Survey and there will be the opportunity for this to be discussed more fully. NATRE has just published a written report on key aspects from the Ofsted Reports. She will arrange for a copy to be sent to Members ahead of the next meeting.

The Chair said she was very impressed with the Newsletter - particularly the resources that are available to Schools. The challenge is to make space to use these in the classroom and finding the time to attend the training. SACRE appreciates the huge amount of work undertaken by Olivia.

NOTED.

289. Update by the Local Authority – Adrian Clarke, Principal Education Adviser (Support)

A report by the Principal Education Officer (Support) had been circulated which updated Members on developments on the following:-

- Communication and resourcing
- Support for Senior Leaders and Governors
- Ofsted Inspections

The Chair advised that Adrian Clarke is unwell and not able to be present. If Members had any questions on the report they should email the Clerk who will pass them on to Adrian to respond.

NOTED.

290. Development Plan 2022-2024 – Patrick Duffy, Clerk to SACRE

Considered –

A report by the Clerk, which sought approval to setting up a Group to work on the Development Plan and nominations to that.

He confirmed that the current Development Plan expires this year and suggested that a small Task and Finish Group of Members, supported by officers, be formed to develop the Plan for 2022-2024. The ideal would be for the Group to comprise one representative from each SACRE Group. The Group would then report back to SACRE in June with a suggested revised Plan for approval.

The calls on people's time are appreciated so, in terms of commitment, it was anticipated that one meeting of approximately one hour would suffice and that can be held remotely at a time to suit attendees.

It would also be helpful if people on the Group could attend the virtual training course to be run by NASACRE on Development Plans on 15th March 2022 from 7.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

If the Committee is agreeable to a Group being formed, nominations are sought - either now or subsequently.

Chris Devanny indicated that he was happy to volunteer from Group A and the Chair said she would be on the Group also.

Resolved –

- a) That a Task and Finish Group be set up to draw up the Development Plan for 2022-2024 and report back to the meeting of SACRE on 21st June 2022.
- b) That any other Members who wish to volunteer to be a part of the Group contact the Clerk.

291. Rolling Work Programme – Patrick Duffy, Clerk to SACRE

Considered –

The latest rolling Work Programme.

The Clerk stressed that the Work Programme is owned by the Committee; it is their Work Programme. Therefore, either now, or at any stage between meetings, Members are welcome to let him know if they have any suggestions for Items to be added to it.

NOTED.

292. Chair's Update

The Chair commented that a lot of ground has been covered this afternoon, in the session on the self-evaluation process and in the main meeting.

She drew together some of those threads:

- The way that SACREs operate is fixed, but each SACRE is only effective when Members, Officers and Schools communicate and work together. We all acknowledge the difficulties of the past two years, but we must look forwards not backwards to make progress.
- We have been trying to fill vacancies in the Groups - and her thanks go to our Clerk, Professional Religious Education Adviser and others who have been making persistent efforts on this - and to increase the diversity of representation, especially in Group A. This is an ongoing objective.
- While the Development Plan now has a considerable amount of *green* in the "Progress made" column, the new Plan will take account of the NASACRE guidance in the Self-Evaluation document; so it might look like we are going backwards for a while. However, that will not be the case; we will be adapting to new demands.
- NASACRE training is freely available to all Members, having been paid in advance by the Local Authority for this School Year. Please take advantage of this to supplement the training we have in our meetings. NASACRE is working closely with the Department for Education and is at the forefront of developments in Religious Education and Collective Worship. The calendar of training sessions via Zoom is on their website.
- Engaging with both Schools and local communities depends, apart from national circumstances, on the active participation of well-informed and skilled SACRE Members. Our Teacher Representatives, even a full complement, cannot speak for every type of School. It is hoped that we can increase our direct contact with teachers and pupils in the coming year, both in and out of meetings.
- The Chair thanked Members for their participation and encouraged them to take up the opportunities that exist to use their skills and expertise and to consider if they can be more actively involved. SACRE still needs a Vice Chair and there is the Development Plan Working Group as well. The Clerk is Members' first point of contact for these matters.

293 Update from Teacher Representative

Considered –

An update from Tara Askew, Curriculum Team Leader at Tadcaster Grammar School.

Tara advised that the Department at her School is called Religion, Philosophy and Ethics – the School distinctively covers all of these facets and this enables it to look at major World Faiths, as well as those that are not as well represented, along with non-religious worldviews, such as Humanism.

She is fortunate that the School teaches all students Religious Education. So every student in Key Stages 3 and 4 has all of their lessons every week and completes the full GCSE course and at “A” Level.

She is in her fifth year at the School and has revamped the whole of Key Stage 3, within the specifications from the Examinations Board. This has been successful and students are engaging with Religion, Philosophy and Ethics.

The demographic of the School is primarily white atheist. This had been a barrier. This is where the ethics and philosophy aspects came into play. For instance, in Year 7, there is a Unit called “Ultimate questions” where the big questions, such as *Why are we here?* are delved into. This has enabled the School to encompass all learners and ensure that they look at things from different perspectives.

Essentially, students are trained to be philosophers - equipped with a range of knowledge from different religions; people of no faith backgrounds; and people of spiritual backgrounds. This gives the students the tools to think through and develop their own belief system – not what other people may have told them.

Students are taught to be their best selves – providing them with an understanding of the World and different people around them.

The tag line of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics is that everybody is different and that is OK. We delve further than the requirements of the Examinations Board.

The Department is well supported by the Head Teacher and lessons are purposeful and meaningful to get everyone’s ideas across.

In response to a question from the Chair, concerning how the Agreed Syllabus is used within the breadth of curriculum outlined, Tara advised that, being part of STARMAT, the School can work with Primary Schools to look at the Syllabus. In Early Years, there are full STARMAT days, which study a particular part of Christianity. Going forward, Year 3 Pupils will, say, look at the life of Jesus. By the time they come to Tadcaster, they have a wealth of knowledge in following the Agreed Syllabus and the studying then goes onto the next layer. Everything is intertwined.

Professor John Adams commented that this sounds like extremely good practice and felt that it would be good if all Departments were similarly focused on the ethical and philosophical elements, as well as the nuts and bolts of religion.

Mohinder Singh Chana asked whether minority religions are covered. Tara said that Year 8 Pupils study Buddhism for the first term and Hinduism in the second term. Sikhism is studied as part of a homework project. Study then moves onto *Evil and Suffering*. In the latter part of Years 7 and 8, the lesser-known religions are considered, based around the ethics and the philosophy. Humanism is also considered as part of the scheme for the work on *Evil and Suffering*. Every effort is made to look at the religions that cannot be covered in depth and students can pick a religion for their project.

Mohinder Singh Chana welcomed the emphasis on ethics and philosophy.

The Chair thanked Tara for her presentation

294. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21st June 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

Daniel Harry, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, added that, at its meeting on 16th February 2022, the County Council will discuss how it wishes to hold its meetings. This will be the final SACRE meeting prior to the County Council elections on 5th May 2022, so it is possible that some of the Local Authority Members may change or sit on different Committees.

295. Any other business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered as a matter of urgency

There was none. The Chair thanked people for attending

The meeting concluded at 3.51 p.m.

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