

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Tuesday 20th September 2022 at 4.00 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: Professor John Adams (Humanist), Sarah Beveridge (Society of Friends), Tom Clayton (Methodist), Chris Devanny (Catholic), David Haddock (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) and Nasr Moussa Emam (Muslim).

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

Group C: Teachers Associations: Tara Askew and Sarah Hodgson

Group D: Local Authority: County Councillors Annabel Wilkinson (Chair) Alyson Baker and George Jabbour

Officers present: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Adrian Clarke (Principal Education Adviser - Support), Patrick Duffy (Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer), Heather Russell (Senior Education Adviser) and Olivia Seymour (Professional Religious Education Adviser)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

13 Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson asked Members to join her in one minute's silence in memory of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth.

14. Chair of SACRE

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson confirmed that, as stated on the Agenda, no nominations had been received for the role of Chair. Therefore, as per guidance in the NASACRE Handbook, the Local Authority had exercised its right to appoint the Chair and she has been appointed.

The Chair added that she has been a Member of SACRE for several years and looks forward to working with the Committee.

She stated that she does not intend to be the Chair for the whole of the 2022/2023 School Year, and would say more about this under the next Item on the Agenda.

She was aware that Chris Devanny, who had kindly agreed to Chair the last meeting, had thanked the previous Chair, Helen Sellers, for all that she had done. She echoed those thanks.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson in the Chair.

15. Election of Vice-Chair

The Chair reported that, as there had not been any nominations for the role of Vice-Chair either, the Local Authority had also exercised its right to appoint a Vice-Chair and that will be Councillor Alyson Baker.

The Chair reminded Members that it is more than a year since SACRE has had a Vice-Chair and having this role filled will assist her, as Chair, and gives the Committee the advantage of having someone ready to step in, should she be unable to attend a meeting.

The Chair considered that it is important to build capacity. Therefore, Councillor Baker will shadow her, with a view to her talking over the Chair from next March. The hope then would be that a SACRE Member – other than a Local Authority Member – will step forward to be the Vice-Chair.

16. Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed people to the meeting.

For the benefit of newly appointed Members, she advised that the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education is a Statutory Committee, established by the Local Authority. Its main function is to advise and support the Local Authority on matters related to Religious Education, which follows the Locally Agreed Syllabus, and on Collective Worship in Schools.

SACRE comprises representatives from four groups:-

- 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 Associations
- Group D – The Local Authority

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

She welcomed new Members - Sarah Hodgson and David Haddock. Sarah had been appointed to the Committee as a Teacher Representative. David has replaced Bill Kimberling as a Faith Group Representative - the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Sarah informed the Committee that she is a Primary School Teacher and Religious Education Lead at Boroughbridge School. David advised that he is a Functional Skills Teacher and has been involved in education and learning.

The Clerk advised that Stuart Anslow, a Teacher Representative, had resigned from SACRE

17. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:-

- County Councillor Robert Heseltine
- Mohinder Singh Chana

18. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

20. Draft Annual Report 2021/2022

Considered –

The afore-mentioned document.

The Principal Education Adviser, Adrian Clarke, took Members through the Annual Report, highlighting the following points, in particular:-

- The document is still very much in draft form and will need to be tidied/formatted.
- More crucially, the examination data from this summer's results is not yet available, but will be for the final version.
- The Annual Report is based on the template agreed by NASACRE (the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education) and the Department for Education and is, therefore, one that needs to be closely adhered to.
- It will be difficult to have the document finalised for December, but that is what officers are working towards.
- Included in the final Annual Report, will be the Questionnaires sent to Schools for the Annual Survey on Religious Education and Collective Worship. The response rate improved significantly this year, which is a real positive, as it helps to provide a better picture. He and the Professional Religious Education Adviser will present an analysis of the responses for the Committee at its next meeting.
- The number of Schools in North Yorkshire fluctuates – with the move to Academy status and the formation of Free Schools.
- A number of resources are available to Schools, the majority of which are password protected for Schools/Academies who have signed up.
- The 2020/2022 Development Plan is appended to the report.

In response to a question about how Schools will be supported, who identified in the Questionnaire that they require improvement, the Professional Religious Education Adviser said that there will be a focus on support through Senior Education Advisers and signposting to the range of training that has been put on this year.

Professor John Adams felt that the draft is very fair and reasonable. It has been another difficult year but it sums up where we are. Professor Adams also

commented that the increase in the number of questionnaires returned is modest. The Principal Education Adviser advised that the response rates for other Surveys are similar. Therefore, the completion rate for the Annual Report is not an outlier. Further thought will be given as to how this can be increased and how the Questionnaire can be built into conversations between Senior Education Advisers and Head Teachers.

Sarah Hodgson enquired whether the Questionnaires are sent to the Head Teacher or the Religious Education Lead. If it is the former, they might not filter down to the appropriate person in the School.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser echoed this point – it is not always known who the Religious Education Leads are.

Councillor George Jabbour asked if it is possible to ascertain the level of interactiveness by knowing the number of Schools who opened and read the emails. The Principal Education Adviser confirmed this is information that the Local Authority is aware of and he related the figures to the Committee.

Councillor Jabbour also wondered whether alternative approaches – such as a phone call – might yield a better result.

In response to a question from Councillor Alyson Baker, the Principal Education Adviser reiterated that Surveys the School Improvement Service send out in other areas receive a similar level of response. His Service will, therefore, aim to email Religious Education Leads in Schools directly, so that conversations can take place with Senior Education Advisers.

The Chair wondered if the Questionnaires might be being received in Schools at a particularly busy time.

Reverend Simone Bennett acknowledged that it was right to push engagement with Schools, but partners have done an extraordinary job in recent times and the system is creaking. It could be a timing issue.

The point was also made that it can be difficult for Schools to respond, due to the calls on their time.

Resolved –

- a) That the draft Annual Report be noted, together with the fact that a finalised draft will be presented to SACRE at its next meeting on 13th December.
- b) That it also be noted that the School Improvement Service will examine ways in which the response rate for School Questionnaires might be improved.

21. Member Presentation

Considered –

A presentation by Sarah Beveridge.

By way of background, the Committee's Development Plan for 2022/2024 contains the action: Implement a programme of Member presentations at each SACRE meeting with a focus on Member work/community involvement and how it links into SACRE. This presentation was the first of these.

Sarah advised that, although she is a Faith Group Representative from the Society of Friends, her presentation is primarily from a Teacher perspective. She is the Head

Teacher at Leyburn Primary School. Teachers need to be aware of diversity and remember why they are here. When it is done well, Religious Education gives great benefit.

Sarah talked the Committee through a PowerPoint presentation that she had prepared entitled *The quality of education*. She highlighted the following:-

- The most crucial component is the quality of education.
- Outcomes are key - what do we really want the children to know – essentially: how can children know more, do more and remember more?
- Curriculum knowledge is multi-faceted. For example: content and concepts; ways of knowing (asking questions; observing practices); personal knowledge; reading (are pupils exposed to the wide range of texts?) and so forth.
- The School is developing its own School Religious Education Curriculum, within the boundaries of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- The content has been reduced to focus on the key issues – as stated above, such as what is it that we really want children to know? An example of this has been teaching the children about the Hindu Faith, which has progressed their knowledge of this religion.
- Areas for Development are to:-
 - strengthen the teaching of Hinduism in Years 3 and 4;
 - ensure that end points identify key understanding; and
 - plan to teach through stories and then review these during assemblies

Sarah concluded by saying that Members would be welcome to come to Leyburn Primary School to see the Religious Education work that is undertaken there.

The Chair thanked Sarah for her informative presentation.

22. Update by the Professional Religious Education Adviser

Considered –

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

The report provided details on the following issues:-

- Training
- SACRE Newsletter
- Religion RE Hub Lead for Religious Education – Yorkshire and Humber
- Still Standing: The future of SACREs Report

The Professional Religious Education Adviser highlighted that training will take the principal religions from the Agreed Syllabus; look at the key concepts; and signpost Schools to further information and resources.

She would appreciate it if any Member who would be interesting in being spotlighted in a future edition of the Newsletter could contact her.

Members are encouraged to peruse the Still Standing Report. This is an analysis of a joint Religious Education Council/NASACRE Project, which ran from May 2020 to June 2021. The 'LAN Project' aimed to test out the recommendations of the

Commission on Religious Education regarding SACREs. A link to this report was included in her report.

In response to a question from the Chair as to membership of SACRE, the Professional Religious Education Adviser said that the Clerk is in contact with Faith Groups and she has been encouraging teachers to consider joining.

In response to a point from Councillor George Jabbour, the Professional Religious Education Adviser confirmed that presentations from SACRE and other organisations is an action within the Development Plan.

NOTED.

23. Timetable for Agreed Syllabus Review

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, which outlined four options for the production of the Agreed Syllabus, together with time implications; costs and a commentary as to what this would involve in each case.

The options suggested were as follows:--

Option A: SACRE renews the licence with RE Today, which includes an updating of the 2019-2024 folder

Option B: SACRE could adopt RE Today's more recent Syllabus, Model B

Option C: SACRE could adopt a Syllabus from another Local Authority

Option D: SACRE could commission a bespoke new Syllabus

The Professional Religious Education Adviser stressed that consultation and discussion on options will include a detailed paper outlining the four options available to the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). These will be presented fully for consultation in the SACRE meeting later in the Autumn Term and through the set up of an ASC. They were presented in this paper, in brief, for information only, to inform the timeline included in the paper.

The starting point will be liaison with Schools, SACRE and interested groups to ascertain views on the syllabus – what works; what does not. etc. This will then be analysed and reported to SACRE in December, as a starting point to help determine the direction of travel.

Professor John Adams applauded the fact that the work on this matter was commencing in good time. He felt that financial arrangements would be important because, if the exercise is dominated by budgetary considerations, options will be apparent rather than real. The Principal Education Adviser stated that he will be discussing this further next week to establish parameters and bring these back to the next meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor George Jabbour as to how the decision had been determined previously, the Professional Religious Education Adviser confirmed that there will be a Session in December for SACRE to understand the merits and demerits of each option.

She stressed that the Agreed Syllabus Conference is the body that will take the decision. This could include reviewing a number of Agreed Syllabuses to ensure that the one chosen is appropriate for this SACRE.

NOTED.

24. National Response to 'A' Level and GCSE Religious Education Results

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, which outlined the national response to A Level and GCSE Religious Education Results.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser confirmed that, by the time of the next meeting, data will be available in respect of this year's examinations, which will enable comparisons, locally and nationally. This will highlight if there are any particular issues that need to be addressed.

Tara Askew advised that her School did not have a Religious Education Class in Year 13, as the numbers were too small. This year, too, there will not be a Class, as the School is favouring other subjects. The Professional Religious Education Adviser said she was aware that this is occurring elsewhere at some other Schools. OFSTED will be picking up Schools who do not teach Religious Education and she is hopeful this will have a positive impact.

Professor John Adams mentioned that in Wales they have moved towards the teaching of religious values and ethics in the hope that this will be a more relevant curriculum.

NOTED.

25. Update by the Local Authority

Considered –

A report by the Principal Education Adviser (Support) which updated Members on developments on the following:-

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

Feedback from OFSTED on Religious Education aspects of teaching is generally positive, although there have been some recent comments about pupils having a limited knowledge of different religions and faiths. The School Improvement Service will liaise with the Schools concerned.

Councillor George Jabbour advised the Committee that he had attended a training course run by NASACRE "So you've joined your local SACRE". He had found it beneficial and encouraged other Members to take advantage of the training provided by NASACRE.

The Clerk, Patrick Duffy, echoed this and advised Members that there is no charge to them, as the Local Authority has bought into the Training Package. Here is the NASACRE [training page](#) for ease of reference.

NOTED.

26. Rolling Work Programme

Considered –

The latest rolling Work Programme.

The Clerk advised that the document is a guide and can be amended, as circumstances change.

He 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.

In response to a comment from Professor John Adams, it was confirmed that key deadlines in relation to the Agreed Syllabus will be built into the Work Programme.

NOTED.

27. Next Meeting – Tuesday 13th December 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

The Clerk confirmed that this will be a hybrid meeting.

It will be held in person at County Hall, Northallerton for those Members who would like to attend in person and who are able to do so.

There will also be the facility for Members who cannot attend in person to join remotely. This might be due to the distance involved and the time spent travelling, for example.

This reflected the feedback from Members when their opinions had been canvassed – some Members clearly wanted to meet in person whereas, for others, attending remotely was preferred. It was acknowledged that, sometimes, the facility to attend remotely can be the difference between being able to be a part of the meeting and not being a part of it.

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

There was no urgent business, as such, but the Chair congratulated the Professional Religious Education Adviser on being appointed Regional RE Hub Lead for North Yorkshire.

The Chair thanked people for attending and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting concluded at 5.30 p.m.

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