

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 28th March 2023 at 5.00 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), Abhijeet Kulkarni* (Hindu), David Haddock* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), Anna Silver* (Judaism) and Mohinder Singh Chana* (Sikh)

Group B: Church of England: Reverend Simone Bennett* (Diocese of Leeds)

Group C: Teachers Associations: Jo Colledge and Sarah Hodgson*

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

Officers present: 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)

In attendance: Owen Griffiths*, Corporate Governance Officer

*Denotes joined remotely

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

47. Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed people to the meeting and, in particular, Dr. Abhijeet Kulkarni, who has joined the Committee as the Hindu Representative and Anna Silver, from the Jewish Faith. Anna is seeking a representative from the Jewish Community, as Brian Berry is no longer their representative but, in the meantime, she was attending in a non-voting capacity.

The Chair also welcomed Owen Griffiths, who will shortly become part of the Democratic Services Team at the new North Yorkshire Council and who was observing the meeting to raise his awareness of SACRE.

Those present - in person and remotely - introduced themselves.

48. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

49. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:-

- Tara Askew
- Chris Devanny
- County Councillor Robert Heseltine
- Nasr Moussa Emam
- Gill Simpson
- Philippa Smith

50. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

51. 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, together with local and national updates regarding Religious Education.

The report provided details on the following issues:-

- Training
- SACRE Newsletter
- 2021 Census Data
- New Religious Education Teacher Recruitment Campaign

The Professional Religious Education Adviser said that she was delighted that the Spring Term Primary Networks had been attended by 37 Teachers, which is an encouraging number.

The Chair commented on the favourable feedback received from Teachers who had attended the afore-mentioned Networks.

Dr. Abhijeet Kulkarni referred to the feedback from Teachers at a Workshop on developing Religious Education, related to Judaism and Hinduism. Part of the feedback was that one of the Teachers found the Workshop very helpful, as “vocabulary around Hinduism was difficult”. He asked whether there is any in-depth knowledge of which vocabulary Teachers or Students find difficult in relation to Religious Education in Hinduism. If there are certain terms or words which have been found to be difficult to understand or teach, or both, could there be any efforts in either modifying the wording or focus on the subject matter, or provide further support and resources to teachers facing difficulty?

In response, the Professional Religious Education Adviser advised that the key concepts have been examined, including a golden thread of key terms. She will send a copy to Dr. Kulkarni and would welcome any feedback.

Mohinder Singh Chana referred to the Newsletter and mentioned that, on the last page, where religious symbols are shown, the one relating to Sikhism is missing. The Professional Religious Education Adviser advised that these had been taken from information produced by RE Today but she will follow this up with them.

Professor John Adams commented that in the Census Data provided, the number of people who said they were of a particular religion was very small in some cases. This

does not mean that those religions should not be studied but this should be noted for context. The number of respondents who stated that they are of No Religion was a clear second in the responses (behind Christianity). This is particularly pronounced among young people and it is they who SACRE are concerned with.

Professor Adams added that, in Wales, Religious Education is now termed Religion, Values and Ethics.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser stressed that an overview of the key concepts of humanism - and how humanism can be woven into Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 - is provided.

The Chair encouraged Members to volunteer to write a paragraph about themselves, with a photo, for inclusion in the Newsletter.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser asked Members to let her have any resources they may have about their Faith and she would signpost them to Schools. In that connection, she thanked Anna Silver, who had provided a copy of Judaism Resources for Teachers. Anna confirmed that she would be happy for the information to be shared with SACRE Members.

The Chair remarked that it is a shame to see that there are less applicants wanting to teach Religious Education. The Professional Religious Education Adviser urged Members to keep an eye out for the recruitment drive to share within their networks and added that SACRE may want to consider its connections with Universities. She will forward on the link to the Social Media campaign.

NOTED.

52. 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

He highlighted the following:-

- School have been encouraged to contribute their views to the Agreed Syllabus Conference, by responding to the questionnaires about the Agreed Syllabus.
- As part of promoting the work of SACRE, the Professional Religious Education Adviser has presented updates on current statutory responsibilities and changes in Religious Education provision to the Spring Head Teacher Leadership Briefings.
- The Professional Religious Education Adviser's contract will be retendered for September 2023.

The Chair noted that, of the fourteen published Inspection Reports by OFSTED since the last meeting, there had been no comments made in relation to Religious Education or Collective Worship. The Principal Education Adviser (Support) responded that the Inspectors are individuals and there might be other matters they want to report on. The following comments were also made on this matter:-

- Heather Russell, Senior Education Adviser, stated that Schools will choose subjects that they want to do a deep dive on and very few choose Collective Worship, due to time constraints.
- The Professional Religious Education Adviser advised that, nationally, there are deep dives and, if areas need work on inclusion and diversity, Religious Education may be mentioned.
- Sarah Beveridge informed Members that her School had been inspected in November and Religious Education was looked at carefully by the Inspector.

NOTED.

53. Verbal update on the deliberations of the Agreed Syllabus Conference

Considered –

A verbal update by the Principal Education Adviser (Support) which summarised the discussion at the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC), which had met immediately prior to this meeting.

The Principal Education Adviser (Support) advised SACRE that the ASC had:-

- Discussed the budget available.
- Discussed pressure on Schools at the moment.
- Looked at the legal requirements for an Agreed Syllabus from September 2024.
- Received feedback from Teachers as to their views on the potential options available.
- Noted comments made that, although the current Agreed Syllabus was introduced in 2019, it is still being implemented and Schools are still getting to grips with it, as a result of the disruption caused by the COVID 19 Pandemic.
- Concluded that it still needs to get to a point at which it is happy to proceed with a particular option and had therefore decided to examine the four main options further at a second meeting in June. This would be held immediately prior to the next SACRE meeting on 20th June 2023. The ASC will commence at 4.00 p.m., with SACRE commencing at 5.00 pm.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser said she would be happy to share with Members who are not on the ASC any of the information that had been considered.

NOTED.

54. 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. Members are welcome to let him know if they have any suggestions for Items to be added to it.

NOTED.

55. Next Meeting – Tuesday 20th June 2023 at 5.00 p.m.

As mentioned in Minute No. 53, above, the meeting will commence at 5.00 p.m. - one hour later than originally scheduled – due to the Agreed Syllabus Conference meeting being held at 4.00 p.m.

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

There was none. However, at the conclusion of the business, the Chair advised SACRE that this would be the last meeting attended by the Reverend Simone Bennett, a representative of the Church of England, Leeds Diocese.

The Chair said that, although she is relatively new to SACRE, she is very aware of the tremendous contribution that Simone has made to SACRE's work and she thanked her, on behalf of the Committee, for all that she has done and wished her all the best for the future.

Simone thanked the Chair and said that she had been a Member for thirteen years. She would ensure that the Leeds Diocese would continue to be represented.

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

The meeting concluded at 5.50 p.m.

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