

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
held on Monday, 21 October, 2019 at 6.00 p.m.
at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

Present

Mr. D. Lomax (Chair)
Mrs P. Lane (Vice Chair)
Mr. A. Orlik
Mrs K. Donnellan
Dr. G. Gomez
Mrs M. Gibbons
Mrs B. Groombridge
Mrs V. Heydon-Matterface
Mr. M. Lad
Imam Saeed-Ur-Rahman
Mr. M. Singh
Mr. K. Mavi
Mr. G Headley
Councillor Ali
Councillor Bashir
Councillor Johal
Councillor Mazhar
Councillor Nasreen
Councillor Rasab
Councillor Singh-Sohal

In Attendance:-

Ms F. Moss	-	(Consultant, REToday)
Ms S. Kelly	-	Assistant Director-Access & Achievement
Mrs. B. Mycock	-	Democratic Services / Clerk to SACRE

1. Welcome and Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2. Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

3. Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July, 2019

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July, 2019 be signed and approved as a true record

5. Excellence in R.E. Training

Ms Helen Leadley, R.E. Co-ordinator for Blackwood School introduced herself and provided an overview of the Excellence in R.E. training sessions, jointly funded by Walsall SACRE and R.E. Today, that she had attended. She emphasised how the Excellence in R.E. training had enabled not only herself but also all of the attendees to delve further into developing creative learning by providing the tools to enable them to audit their teaching with regard to their own subject knowledge. The aim of the course was to create R.E. Leaders capable of supporting and improving R.E. within their own schools but also within other primary schools throughout the borough.

Ms Leadley tabled a presentation document in relation to the religious education she taught to most of the R.E. lessons within the cohorts at her school. She informed members that she had combined the practices she had learnt from the Excellence in RE training and what she had learnt through sharing teaching practices with the other participants. This has resulted in the children within her school thoroughly enjoying their R.E. lessons and learning key subject knowledge and procedural skills.

The presentation included the following preparation stages to her teaching:

Stage One

The first task had been to audit the subject background within her respective school as well as her personal and colleague's knowledge.

Stage Two

To improve pupils understanding of stories through visual hooks, ie. jigsaws, models. She advised how children had researched mosques and made models for the classrooms.

Stage Three

Planning a visit to places of worship – aim to inspire the children's investigative skills, their understanding of other religions and enable pupils to show pride in their heritage by sharing experiences. She advised members how visits to places of worship had been the most challenging obstacle to overcome due to a number of issues:

- Funding – ever decreasing school funding and difficult for all parents to contribute.
- PPA timetable.
- Engaging with parents to volunteer to help with transport / walking with groups of children.
- Priority of other year group visits for time, money and volunteers.

As a temporary solution when visits had been unable to take place, guest speakers from places of worship had attended the school to speak with the children. The use of iPads had also enabled pupils to take 'virtual visits' to places of worship.

Ms Leadley emphasised how the Excellence in R.E. training and ongoing Network meetings had personally:

- Expanded her depth of understanding and personal subject knowledge.
- Provided regular professional development and ongoing support for all subject leaders.
- Enabled her to meet like-minded people.
- Ensured a creative and inspiring learning environment.

Ms Leadley reported that the course attendees had felt the training had enabled them to become specialists in their teaching of the subject and that they would continue to put all of the practices learnt into present and future teaching.

Ms Leadley concluded by thanking SACRE for providing the funding to enable the course to take place and she once again emphasised how the Excellence in RE training had made a huge difference to all the participants and ultimately to their respective pupils.

The Chair thanked Ms Leadley for her enlightening presentation.

6. **Walsall for All Programme Update**

Haroon Ravat, Integration Area Project Manager, Community, Equality and Cohesion introduced himself and gave a verbal presentation with regard to the Walsall for All programme. He informed SACRE that Walsall was one of five areas chosen to receive funding for an integration programme to work with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It was long-term strategy to create strong and integrated communities in Walsall with the aim of fostering greater community cohesion. He informed members that community cohesion work with young people had escalated and he provided details on a number of projects and initiatives for children and young people.

Walsall's School Linking Programme was one of a number of successful projects provided by Walsall for All. The remit of the programme was to foster tolerance and respect among young children and young people. Every school signed up to the programme would be 'twinning' with a school of dissimilar makeup with the anticipation of improving the understanding of faith across the participating schools. During 2018, Walsall for All piloted the programme with four primary and two secondary schools. Following on from the success of the pilot, the programme was extended to 22 primary schools and four secondary schools. He added that all of the schools involved with Walsall for All during the past twelve months had requested continued participation for a further year. Mr Ravat provided details of the schools included within the programme and a suggestion was made for the School Linking Programme to engage with special schools, which were sometimes isolated from mainstream activities.

Mr Ravat reported how Walsall for All also offered support to enable schools to become UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools. Unicef worked with schools in the UK to *'create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured and they are able to thrive'*.

Mr Ravat also updated members on a number matters and initiatives, which included:-

- Walsall for All had received match funding from the Arts Council.
- Faith Action Day to be held 23rd October to bring together faith partners and local organisations to demonstrate the work they are doing to promote integration in Walsall.
- Faith and Belief Forum – Walsall Council's Community Cohesion Officers encouraging young people to engage in conversations about things important.
- Night Shelter – Black Country YMCA commissioned to run the night shelter includes partnership working with Outreach, Hindu Forum and Salvation Army. He informed members he could provide contact details should anyone wish to volunteer or want further information. In response to a query regarding the Night Shelter, Mr Ravat reported that the service had been commissioned out to the Black Country YMCA and was operated by the Outreach Team, Hindu Forum and Salvation Army. He informed members he could provide further contact information should anyone wish to volunteer.
- Walsall for All Board – responsible for setting strategic direction and driving forward implementation of the programme. Chaired by Dr Primrose, the Board is looking to develop youth service.

The RE Today Consultant enquired whether Walsall for All and SACRE could work together with regard to the RE syllabus. Mr Ravat was optimistic about working with SACRE insofar as ensuring support offered would fit within the timescales and be compatible with the syllabus.

The Chair thanked Haroon for his informative presentation and hoped there would be closer engagement between SACRE and Walsall for All.

Mrs Gibbons left at this juncture of the meeting.

7. Draft Walsall SACRE – Constitution and Terms of Reference

A copy of a draft Constitution and Terms of Reference had been submitted

(see annexed)

The R.E. Today Consultant introduced the item. She informed members that the revised format for consideration had been used in several other SACRE's and it covered all legal limits and requirements.

The following comments with regard to the draft document were raised:-

Page 1 - no changes.

Page 2 - no changes.

Page 3-5 Group A: Religions and religious denominations in the area (other than Church of England)

 Group B: Lichfield Diocese Board of Education

 Group C: Teacher representatives

 Group D: Local Authority representatives

 Consensus figures to ensure all religions are represented

Page 4 - Humanist representative. Ms Moss enquired whether Walsall SACRE wanted to include a Humanist member to sit within Part A (religions and religious denominations in the area (other than Church of England) to enable them to vote or alternatively to co-opt a Humanist member whereby they would not be included within a particular group and would have no voting right.

Page 5 - Teacher representatives. Current Constitution advises that six Members to be nominated by the teacher unions. It was suggested that a mix of members from professional associations, senior leaders from primary and secondary (community and religious denomination schools) and Heads/leaders/Governors.

Page 8 - Chair and Vice Chair. Change Constitution 'to remain in their positions for two years' as opposed to appointed yearly.

It was therefore:

Resolved

- i. That members receive an updated Constitution and Terms of Reference for further consideration / approval.
- ii. That a representative from Humanist UK be invited to a future meeting to provide an overview of their practice with a view to Members considering a Humanist UK representative on Walsall's SACRE.

8. National Updates from R.E. Today

A number of SACRE National Updates Autumn 2019 had been submitted (see annexed).

In particular, Ms Moss drew members' attention to the new Ofsted Framework. The new framework emphasised the importance of a broader and more balanced curriculum including R.E. for all pupils in all school types. The first inspection reports under the new framework had been released and inspectors had indicated where improvements were needed in R.E.

Ms Moss advised that she would monitor and provide SACRE with Ofsted inspection reports pertaining to Walsall schools when they become available. She also suggested that SACRE considered writing to the schools 'at risk' with the new information and remind them of their responsibility with regard to teaching R.E.

Resolved

- i. That SACRE monitors local reports
- ii. That the R.E. Today Consultant write to all schools considered 'at risk' to advise them of the new Ofsted framework.

Councillor Ali, Councillor Mazhar and Mrs Heydon-Matterface left at this juncture of the meeting.

9. School Workforce Data and Compliance in Walsall Secondary Schools

Ms Moss tabled a document, which contained data pertaining to religious education within Walsall's secondary schools.

Ms Moss reminded members that it was compulsory to teach R.E. to all pupils regardless of whether a pupil had chosen the subject for GCSE or not. The only exception would should a child's parents request withdrawal of their child from the subject. Ms Moss provided a breakdown of the data contained within the document, which included the percentage of time each school had spent teaching R.E. within KS3 and KS4 plus the percentage of pupils within each school who had taken the subject as a GCSE, which was very low. She advised that all secondary schools had to provide the data to the DfE annually and she stated the information was useful to initiate conversations with secondary schools.

The Chair reminded members that SACRE had written to all secondary schools in the past but this had made little impact on their R.E. teaching. A discussion ensued and members requested that a joint letter between SACRE and the local authority be sent to the secondary schools that were a cause for concern to SACRE with regard to their lack of R.E. teaching.

The RE Today Consultant advised members she would produce a standard letter which could then be populated and made bespoke to each individual school by utilising the data from the respective school's website. A response from each respective secondary school would be requested all responses to be brought back to a future meeting.

The Assistant Director-Access & Achievement advised that feedback would be utilised within the 'Schools Causing Concern' protocol for further conversation and potential intervention.

Resolved

- i. That the RE Consultant to write a bespoke letter to any of the secondary schools which were a cause of concern to SACRE with regard to their lack of R.E. teaching and the respective secondary school responses to be brought back to a future meeting.

10. Walsall Agreed Syllabus (2016-2021) – a Plan to Review the Syllabus for September 2021

This item was deferred to the meeting scheduled for 16 March, 2020.

11. Date of future meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 16 March, 2020.

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.05 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: