

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

held on Monday, 14 March, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

at Pleck Methodist Church, Bescot Road, Walsall

Present

Mr. C. Hopkins (Chairman)
Councillor Robertson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Cook
Councillor Martin
Councillor Rochelle
Mrs. S. Blackmore
Mrs. M. Gibbons
Mr. D. Lomax
Father J. Nankivell
Mr. R. Simmons
Mr. R. Askari

Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. D. Thakker, Mrs. B. Groombridge and Mr. M. Sacha.

Change of membership

The Chairman read out the resignation of Mrs. L.M. Edwards (VOICE representative) and welcomed Mr. Razzah Askari as their new representative.

Resolved

That the change of membership from Mrs. L.M. Edwards to Mr. R. Askari be noted and a letter be sent to Mrs. Edwards wishing her well and thanking her for her contribution to SACRE over the years.

Introductions

Members and other persons present introduced themselves at the meeting.

Minutes - 11 October, 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October, 2010 were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October, 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Notes of Strategy Sub-Group - 14 February, 2011

The notes of the Strategy Sub-Group held on 14 February, 2011 were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the notes of the Strategy Sub-Group from its meeting held on 14 February, 2011 be received and noted.

Late items to be introduced by the Chairman

The Chairman informed the Committee that he wished to introduce a late item relating to the West Hill Project and the English Baccalaureate. The Chairman also agreed to take a late item in respect of The Art Gallery - Proposed Exhibition.

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

The Committee was informed that there were no items for consideration in the private session.

Faith Tour Guides

Information on the progress of the provision of faith tour guides in Walsall was submitted

(see annexed)

Mr. Simmons informed the meeting that the faith tour guides met at Blue Coat School and visits had been carried out to the Gudwara, the Shree Mandir and St. Matthews Church. There is a Christian group, Hindu group and Sikh group but unfortunately, there was no Muslim group. The scheme was progressing well and the groups had been learning their own faiths in more depth as well as practising their presentation skills for visits. Their examination would take place in April/May and an open day would be held when each group would give a presentation. The presentation evening for successful candidates would be held on Monday, 6th June, 2011 and they would receive their qualification as level 2 in Guiding.

He informed the Committee that Ruth Tatlow and Valerie Morris had been heavily involved in the project, which was now nearing completion. The course had merged with Sandwell and there were, at present, twelve people taking part.

In response to questions, Mr. Simmons confirmed that the syllabus related to visits to the Gudwara in Wellington Street and the Shree Mandir in Pleck, St. Matthews Church had also been involved. Guides were already available at those venues and the course was providing them with additional skills.

He informed SACRE that anyone interested in visiting the venues should contact them by telephone to make their own arrangements.

Mr. Simmons reported that the scheme was heavily subsidised by schools at present and it was hoped to gain funding through the West Hill Project for further training in the Autumn of 2011.

Mr. Askari informed SACRE that the Aisha Mosque in Rutter Street, Caldmore did take school visits.

Resolved

That the report circulated on Faith Tour Guides and the additional information provided by Members be noted.

Arrangements for visits to schools

Members were requested to indicate their availability to attend a school visit with Mr. Richards.

Councillor Martin indicated that she would be available to visit any school and that she already had a current Criminal Records Bureau check in place.

Resolved

That Members contact Mr. Richards to arrange a visit to a school.

NASACRE Annual General Meeting

A copy of the details for the NASACRE Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 11th May, 2011 was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That any Member interested in attending the NASACRE Annual General Meeting to be held in Birmingham on 11th May, 2011 be requested to contact the SACRE Clerk in order that arrangements can be made.

Action Plan

Mr. Richards circulated a copy of the Action Plan and confirmed that visits had taken place to Little Bloxwich, Phoenix, Joseph Leckie and Queen Mary's Grammar Schools. He undertook to contact Councillor Martin and Mr. D. Lomax to arrange further visits. He referred to the need to re-circulate the questionnaire and letter to schools in order to get information on R.E. teaching within schools as this would help to establish how the new agreed syllabus was working and enable SACRE to support schools to develop the quality of R.E. teaching.

Mr. Richards referred to meetings that had been arranged with Lat Blaylock and to the support that R.E. Today would be giving Walsall SACRE in developing good practice and gaining intelligence from subject leaders.

Further action was required on the self-evaluation elements of the Action Plan.

Mr. Blaylock informed SACRE that he was engaged in similar work with other Local Authorities and the Service Level Agreement with Walsall continued to the end of July, 2011. He referred to a training event for teachers on religious education and community cohesion in primary schools; twelve schools were represented and it was planned to hold network meetings where subject leaders not in primary school could attend. Twelve people attended the first session and eighteen attended the second session which indicated a need for such an event.

Mr. Blaylock's presentation was circulated:-

(see annexed)

Mr. Blaylock confirmed that the programme had been developed to suit the requirement of teachers in delivering the agreed syllabus.

Resolved

That the presentation and information provided by R.E. Today be received and noted.

Action Plan

Mr. Richards circulated the Action Plan that had been submitted to the previous meeting:-

(see annexed)

and provided an update on the following:-

Ensure that links are made between revised primary curriculum and the use of the agreed syllabus - the areas to be used by teachers related to learning, the agreed syllabus was not sufficient to deliver high quality R.E. learning.

R.E. across the Black Country - Mr. Richards referred to the R.E. Conference and the poor attendance last year and felt that this should be linked with Sandwell. Mr. Blaylock confirmed that Sandwell would be undertaking visits to religious establishments this year, Walsall could join those visits or could have an event for their own teachers.

Use of the National R.E. Sef - Mr. Richards indicated that SACRE's questionnaire could be used to facilitate schools to evaluate its own R.E.

Promote the use of an R.E. website - SACRE was advised that Walsall did not have a designated R.E. website but there were a number of sites that could provide guidance on those with the best material for the purposes of teaching R.E. A list of websites were included in the agreed syllabus.

The Chairman referred to the importance of monitoring and of visits to schools in order to gain up-to-date information which would be used to commission new pieces of work.

Members were informed of the importance of sharing good practice as well as resources wherever possible. Mr. Blaylock referred to the need for information on A level R.E. study as well as availability at GCSE and AS/A2. He referred to the non-inclusion of R.E. in the English Baccalaureate and the need for SACREs to maintain the priority to promote the study of religion for 14 - 19 year olds. The number of students studying GCSE and 'A' level had increased but there was still some vulnerability of the subject in terms of the English Baccalaureate.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Blaylock for his work with Walsall and it was clear that the six point plan was supported by SACRE.

Resolved

That SACRE endorse the work carried out by R.E. Today and that an item be included on every SACRE agenda on the up-to-date position in relation to the Action Plan.

Resourcing of SACRE

The report of the Executive Director (Resources) was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Mr. Richards confirmed that the core support was being discussed with teachers and eighty hours of his time and £5,000 was being provided to support SACRE.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted.

Late Items

(a) English Baccalaureate

Ms. Blackmore referred to the need to contact Members of Parliament on the early day motion 13/75 to ask MPs to sign up to support the inclusion of R.E. in the English Baccalaureate.

(b) West Hill Project

Mrs. Blackmore indicated that a grant of up to £5,000 was available under the project. Mr. Simmons requested that Ruth Tatlow be contacted and requested to submit a project on faith tour guide training.

Resolved

That SACRE agree that Ruth Tatlow be contacted and requested to write a bid for submission to the West Hill Project on the faith tour guide training.

(c) Display of children's art in The New Art Gallery

Councillor Rochelle requested that consideration be given to an approach being made to The New Art Gallery and to schools for a display of children's art focussing on religion being accommodated within the Gallery focussing on work undertaken within schools around R.E.

Councillor Rochelle undertook to contact Mr. Blaylock with regard to taking forward the suggestion to display children's art in relation to religion in The New Art Gallery.

Resolved

That SACRE support the initiative and further discussions on the possibility of children's art being displayed in the New Art Gallery be held at the next meeting.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting was terminated at 6.55 p.m.

Chairman

Date