

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

held on Monday, 16 March, 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

Present

Mr. D. Lomax (Chair)	-	United Reform Church
Mrs P. Lane (Vice Chair)	-	Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education
Mr. A. Orlik	-	Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education
Mrs K. Donnellan	-	Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education
Mrs M. Gibbons	-	Methodist, Walsall
Mrs B. Groombridge	-	Walsall Quakers
Mr. M. Lad	-	Shree Ram Mandir (Walsall)
Councillor Ali	-	Local Authority
Councillor Bashir	-	Local Authority
Councillor Johal	-	Local Authority
Councillor Singh-Sohal	-	Local Authority
Mrs H. Leadley	-	Teacher Representative

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

Apologies were received on behalf of Dr. Gomez, Imam Saeed-Ur-Rahman, Mrs V. Heydon-Matterface, Mr. G. Headley, Councillor Mazhar, Councillor Nasreen and Councillor Rasab.

2. Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

A late SIAMS report to be included at agenda item 10.

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 21 October, 2019

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October, 2019 be signed and approved as a true record

5. Humanists UK

Mr. W. Green, member of Humanists UK gave a presentation to SACRE and provided an overview of Humanists UK.

He stated that RE was the space in the curriculum where young people explored questions around identity, belief, values, meaning and purpose and it was essential the subject included non-religious as well as religious perspectives on the questions and themes it explored. He believed it was important for SACREs to include a humanist representative to offer support to guarantee inclusive RE in schools as part of the curriculum.

Mr Green elaborated on some of the key characteristics of Humanism:

- they are atheist, non-theistic or agnostic and usually secular
- have a naturalist view and look to science to understand the world around us
- they can and should live good lives without religion or superstitious beliefs
- do not believe in life after death – this life is the only one we have
- in the UK the public face of Humanism is Humanists UK
- their decisions are based on available evidence and an assessment of the likely outcomes of our actions
- behaviour should be based on individual responsibility, co-operation and respect for others – *‘one should not treat others in ways that one would not like to be treated’*, known as The Silver Rule.
- Make the best of the one life we have

A discussion then followed with regard to the presentation.

Ms Moss, RE Today consultant informed the meeting that she served on a number of SACREs and it was evident that the RE subject had changed over the years. She stated it had become clear that it was important to include discussion around non-religious beliefs as many children and young people now fell into that category. Ms Moss reported that at in the last census for Walsall in 2011, out of 269,323 people who had been asked about religion, 53,876 people had indicated they had no religion (19.7%).

Mrs Leadley advised that as an RE teacher, there were many faiths to teach and schools should not ignore children with different sets of beliefs and should some children identify with a non-belief, they could compare and understand other people’s cultures/religions thus promoting discussion within a classroom. RE should be inclusive to all children whatever their beliefs.

The Assistant Director – Access and Achievement advised that statutory guidance acknowledged there were children who had non-religious beliefs do not believe (etc) and appropriate between Christian and other religious beliefs.

Mr. Orlik, representative from the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education stated non-religious beliefs should be recognised to enable children to understand the differences and the definition of a none believer – Humanist.

Mr. Green stipulated that Humanism was more than non-believing but also how people related to their fellow human beings.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Green for his informative presentation and advised that Walsall SACRE would consider whether to include a humanist representative on its membership.

Mr. Green left the meeting.

6. Head Teacher of RE at Blue Coat CE Academy

Mrs Alice Homer introduced herself and provided a presentation and overview in relation to her role as Head of RE and Sociology at Blue Coat CE Academy, which taught secondary pupils. She advised that her school had three full time specialist RE teachers, which enabled all pupils to study the subject.

Mrs Homer explained the Academy used a mixture of the Walsall Agreed Syllabus and Understanding Christianity from RE Today and that as a Church of England Academy, 50% of their RE curriculum had a Christian focus and 50% focussed on other faiths or beliefs and all major religious festivals were celebrated.

Mrs Homer than provided the meeting with a breakdown for each term of the RE curriculum for the key stages within the school, which included examples of the pupils' work:

- **Year 7**
 - Autumn 1 - What is religion? Exploring the main religions
 - Autumn 2 - People of God and Prophecy – does the world need prophets today?
 - Spring 1 - Incarnation – why do Christians believe Jesus is God on Earth?
 - Spring 2 - Gospel – what's so radical about Jesus?
 - Summer 1 - Good and evil – how do we deal with evil and suffering?
 - Summer 2 - Islam – what do Muslims believe about God?
- **Year 8**
 - Autumn 1 - God – if God is Trinity, what does that mean for Christians?
 - Autumn 2 - Creation and the Fall – why are people good and bad?
 - Spring 1 - Death – is it the end?
 - Spring 2 - Justice – what does justice mean to Christians?
- **KS4**
 - Focus on scripture – pupils were given texts from the Bible or Qur'an to explain what the scriptures mean.
 - Key terms
 - Comparison of views

Mrs Homer advised that she would be prepared to offer advice to other secondary schools in relation to their RE teaching.

The Chair thanked Mrs Homer for her very informative presentation.

7. Constitution Update

A copy of the draft Constitution had been submitted

(see annexed)

The RE Today Consultant introduced a copy of the draft Constitution. Members considered the draft constitution and the following discussions ensued:-

Page 3 - Group C – Teacher representatives. It was suggested that a mix of up to six teachers from both primary and secondary schools be invited to join SACRE

The RE Today Consultant advised members that the majority of SACREs included a Humanist UK representative within their membership and she reiterated that RE encompassed both religious and non-religious views.

Resolved (unanimously)

That the draft Constitution be agreed as set out, subject to:-

- i. Group C: Teacher representatives to include a mix of up to six teacher representatives from both primary and secondary schools;
- ii. That a representative from Humanists UK be invited to join Walsall's SACRE as a Co-opted member.

8. Walsall Agreed Syllabus (2021 to 2026)

A copy of the Option for the Agreed Syllabus Review 2020 had been submitted

(see annexed)

The RE Today Consultant left the room at this juncture of the meeting due to having a commercial interest in the item.

The Assistant Director – Access and Achievement drew members' attention to the document, which included the legal requirements required of SACRE to review its RE Agreed Syllabus every five years. She suggested a small Agreed Syllabus Working Party be assigned to bring forward a variety of options for SACRE's consideration. The working party to comprise of the current Sub Group as agreed at its meeting of 22nd July, 2019, which consisted of a member from each category as follows:-

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| • Mr Lomax | - | Group A – Christian and other religious denominations |
| • Mr. Orlik | - | Group B – Church of England |
| • Mrs H. Headley | - | Group C – Teacher Representative |
| • Councillor Sohal Singh | - | Group D – Local Authority |

Resolved

That the current Sub-Group as appointed by SACRE at its meeting of 22nd July 2019, plus a teacher representative meet to discuss the Agreed Syllabus for September 2021 and to bring forward a variety of options for SACRE's consideration.

The RE Today Consultant returned to the meeting.

Mrs Gibbons left at this junction of the meeting.

9. National and Local updates:

A number of SACRE National Updates for Spring 2020 had been submitted by the RE Today Consultant to provide information relating to RE nationally (see annexed)

In particular, the RE Today Consultant drew members attention to the following items within the updates:-

Ofsted reports

NATRE had published a document showing all of the Ofsted reports that had mentioned RE up until the end of November 2019. Only a few Walsall schools had been mentioned within the Ofsted reports. The RE Today Consultant to provide an overview of comments pertaining to Walsall within the NATRE document.

Increase in Secondary RE. ITE Trainees

Members were encouraged to hear that more specialised teachers were going into RE teaching nationally.

Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools

The RE Today Consultant reported on recent coverage in the press regarding two children who had been withdrawn from Collective Worship in a primary school in Oxfordshire. It was suggested that this be an item for SACRE to focus on in the future.

Resolved

- i. That the local reports be noted

Councillor Bashir left at this juncture of the meeting.

- 10. SIAMS Reports:**
Christ Church CE Primary School
Blue Coat CE (A) Junior
Little Bloxwich CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The SIAM reports for Christ Church CE Primary Schools, Blue Coat CE (A) Junior and Little Bloxwich CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School had been submitted

(see annexed)

The Chair requested a letter to be sent on behalf from SACRE congratulating the three schools on their recent SIAMs reports.

A discussion ensued with regard to RE education within all primary and secondary schools including Academies. Concern was raised in relation to the level of RE taught within Walsall's secondary schools. The Assistant Director - Access & Achievement advised that the local authority had a RAG rating system and would process all RE going forward. Should any secondary school not be engaging in RE, a joint escalation from SACRE and the local authority will be undertaken.

A suggestion was made to invite a representative from Walsall for All to a future meeting. Walsall for All were a faith and belief group who have been working alongside some primary and secondary schools in Walsall.

Resolved

- i. That the SIAMS reports be noted and that letters of congratulations be sent to the respective schools from SACRE;
- ii. That a representative from Walsall for All be invited to a future meeting.

11. Annual Report (2018 to 2019)

The draft Annual Report was submitted.

Resolved

- i. That the Chair to provide a foreword statement
- ii. A summary to be included within the report highlighting keys are of prioritisation.

12. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting had been agreed for 7th July, 2020.

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.05 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: