

**Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education**

**held on Monday, 5 March, 2018 at 6.00 p.m.**

**at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall**

**Present**

Mr. C. Hopkins (Chair)  
Mr. D. Lomax (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Robertson  
Councillor Barker  
Mr. P. Prasadam  
Mr. G. Gomez  
Mrs M. Gibbons  
Mr. M. Lad  
Mr. G. Tsiappourdhi

The Chair had adjourned the meeting for 5 minutes for late arrivals to ensure the meeting was quorate. Once the meeting was quorate, the Chair asked all persons present to introduce themselves..

**In Attendance:-**

Mrs E. Maher	(Children's Services)
Ms F. Moss	(Consultant, R.E. Today)
Mrs. B. Mycock	(Democratic Services / Clerk to SACRE)

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Craddock, Phillips, Rochelle and Washbrook, Mrs. K. Donnellan and Mrs B. Groombridge

**2. Late Items to be introduced by the Chair**

Notification of new SACRE members

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

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

**4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October, 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

With reference to agenda item number 5, the Clerk confirmed no response had been received following SACRE's letter to the Secretary of State expressing its concern with regards to the low level of teaching time given to offering RE nationwide within schools and particularly within academies.

## **5. Update on RE Today Project for Excellence**

Mrs Maher (Education Advisor) reminded members that at the meeting of 9 October, 2018, SACRE had approved funding for an R.E. Today initiative entitled 'Project for Excellence' to create RE Leaders capable of supporting and improving RE not only within their respective schools but in other primary schools. The cost of the initiative was £5,000, which would be jointly funded between Walsall SACRE and RE Today at a cost of £2,500.00 each.

Ms Moss (RE Today) advised members that RE Today had been running the course with primary schools nationwide for over 6 years, providing training for between 8 and 14 primary school teachers per authority yearly and adding that Head Teachers of the respective, participating primary schools sign a commitment agreement to allow their staff member/s to attend the full 3.1/2 days of the course over the academic year. She then provided members with detailed information regarding the course content of the proposed 3.5 days training, as contained within appendix 1 of the report now submitted.

Mrs Maher reported that Walsall primary schools had been very enthusiastic about the initiative, resulting in 13 nominations (a combination of teachers and teaching assistants) registering to attend the project, most of whom were from non religious primary schools (church schools have their own support networks). The aim of the project was to support and enable all nominees to become confident enough to either provide or support RE teaching within other schools.

Members asked a number of questioning in relation to the project, which included:-

- **Could the training be extended through the School Cluster Groups?**

The Cluster Chairs will be asked. Out of 13 delegates, 7 of the delegates' schools served diverse communities whilst 6 did not.

- **How can more delegates be encouraged to attend and would they be supported?**

Schools to be encouraged to share what is good practice within their schools as well as what may need improving, with the potential for schools to run their own network meetings. Candidates would be provided with contact details for both RE Today and Mrs Maher to ensure their ongoing support both online or face to face, and contact details of the other delegates for information sharing / moral support.

- **Compliance of Primary Academies**

Academies, including Studio Schools, do not have to follow the local authority RE syllabus to teach a minimum of 5% of school hours on RE but they do have a Statutory duty of care to provide RE 'school workforce' data.

Ms Moss tabled two documents which were not available at time of agenda dispatch:-

- i. 'Schools Workforce data 2016 – obtained by NATRE in an FOI from the DfE' pertaining to secondary schools and academies and
- ii. GCSE Results 2017

Ms Moss drew members' attention to the correlation between the GCSE results of the schools and academies which provided a higher percentage of RE teaching through the year groups, and their resulting GCSE results. As predicted, the results from the church schools had higher percentages of pupils who entered a GCSE in RE compared with the secondary schools who provided minimum to below percentage hours of RE teaching. In response to a query, Ms Moss stated the statistics highlighted that Walsall Studio School provided no RE teaching within any age group and she added that that National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) would monitor all schools and would take appropriate action.

*Councillor Barker left at this juncture of the meeting.*

Members raised concerns with regard to the number of academies who taught below the recommended percentage of RE within years 7 and 8 and little or no RE in year 10 onwards, particularly with regard to the statutory requirement from the DfE for all schools to teach the subject. In response, Ms Moss advised that the local authority's agreed syllabus stated all 14-19 year olds must study Christianity plus one other religion and the data had proven that where schools were not following the agreed syllabus and therefore entering their students for full or short courses, this has resulted in very few students entering and gaining an A-C grade in the GCSE and thus affecting schools' ratings.

Ms Moss reported that a number of SACRE's had utilised NATRE templates in order to ask relevant schools pertinent questions regarding the overall low percentage of RE teaching, the resultant low number of students taking a GCSE in the subject and what they were doing regarding RE within their particular school. Councillor Robertson said the local authority had a duty of care to ensure children were equipped to understand RE and that it was a critical part of their education and he suggested that Walsall SACRE look into NATRE's template letters with the potential of utilising them to remind both primary and secondary schools of not only the local authority's approved syllabus requirements but importantly of the DfE requirements with regarding RE teaching. SACRE also suggested MP's be engaged.

.

**Recommendations**

- i. That SACRE request NATRE templates be utilised to remind both primary and secondary schools of not only the local authority's approved syllabus requirements but of the DfE requirement regarding RE teaching
- ii. That the content of the report be noted.

**6. Notice of Motion to Council on 13.11.17**

The report of the Education Advisor was submitted.

(see annexed)

The Education Advisor provided SACRE with a progress update following the Notice of Motion submitted to Council on 13 November, 2017, which asked the Council to support:-

- i. SACRE's actions in researching the level of RE provision particularly KS4 in Walsall Secondary Schools;
- ii. join with Walsall SACRE to write to the Secretary of State for education to urge that Central Government will instruct OFSTED to also check on curriculum provision to ensure that schools comply to provide a legal amount of RE;
- iii. write to all secondary schools in Walsall to remind them of their legal obligation to provide RE under the 1998 school standards and framework act.

**Resolved**

That the report be noted.

**7. SACRE Budget**

A report had been submitted by Mrs Mycock, Democratic Services Officer/Clerk to SACRE, provided a breakdown to date of SACRE's annual budget 2017/18.

(see annexed)

The Clerk advised members of the under spend of £1,700 and members requested that the remaining budget be assigned to providing additional resources to RE projects.

**Resolved**

That the SACRE budget under spend be assigned to provide additional resources to RE projects

**8. SIAM (Statutory Inspection of Anglican Methodist Schools)**

The SIAM reports for both Cooper and Jordan CE Voluntary Aid Endowed Primary School and All Saints National Academy were submitted

(see annexed)

The Chair commented on the good reports for both schools

**Resolved**

That the reports be noted.

**9. Late Items (or urgency only)**

Mr. Lad advised members he had been approached by a Walsall temple which was organising a multi-faith event to take place around mid April. The temple wished to invite representatives from all 5 religions plus 30 schools to attend as well as members of the public and SACRE members.

**10. Dates of next meeting for 2018/19**

The next meeting of the 2018/19 Municipal Year are as follows:-

- Monday, 16 July, 2018

A report will be provided at the next meeting providing the dates for 2018/19 municipal year.

**Termination of meeting**

The meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman: .....

Date: .....