

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MONDAY 9 MARCH, 2015

FEEDBACK ON TROJAN HORSE CONFERENCE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To feedback to SACRE on the “Trojan Horse aftermath – implications and opportunities” Conference held on the 27 November, 2014.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the key points from the “Trojan Horse aftermath implications and opportunities” Conference held on 27 November, 2014 be noted.

(see Appendix 1)

3.0 Background

- 3.1 As a result of Ofsted inspections of a number of schools in Birmingham concerns had been raised which resulted in investigations into allegations of a “Trojan Horse” plot. The conference had been designed to consider some of the concerns.

Trojan Horse

Key Points from Recent Training

1. Lack of awareness in schools and elsewhere about the legal requirements for Collective Worship. OFSTED are looking at this in particular with regard to British Values. Increased number of Freedom of Information requests with regards to this.
2. A national picture of a decline in affiliation to historic churches and a rise in those stating they have no religion.
3. National picture of increase in faiths associated with post-war immigration, especially Islam.
4. National growth of independent and black majority churches.
5. There is a danger of Islamophobia and anti-Muslimism.
6. There are challenges for RE in schools about how to deal with these contentious issues eg looking at human rights, pupil's moral development, the right to freedom of belief.
7. One challenge is that while many young people can accept religious freedom, they view as "odd" religious commitment and behaviour as odd.
8. Trojan Horse Birmingham- 21 schools were visited. 4 were secondary and 16 primary and 1 was a 5-16 school. 8 were academies. None of the schools were faith schools. 16 of the inspections were a general monitoring under section 8. 5 of the inspections started as section 8 but were then deemed as section 5 due to the extent of the concerns (The Famous Five).
9. In reality in these five schools little evidence of radicalisation- more to do with mainstream religion and conservatism.
10. Why is the OFSTED focus on RE not accompanied by a DfE strategy to raise standards in RE?
11. New agenda with emphasis on British values and "preparation for life in modern Britain". Some examples in inspections of inspectors showing a knee-jerk response to this new agenda leading to some unpredictability for schools.
12. Changes in Ofsted guidance to deal with issues in the wake of Trojan Horse.
13. Ofsted are probing
 - The breadth and balance of the curriculum
 - Wider aspects related to life in Modern Britain
 - Narrowing too early in Secondary School
 - Governance and involvement
 - Has school anticipated potential issues around extremism
 - Website information...triggering inspection trails.

14. Schools need to make sure

- They are clear about how the law on RE and Collective Worship applies
- RE curriculum needs to reflect the curriculum expectations of the Ofsted Handbook and be publically available
- RE to encounter diversity of Modern Britain
- Strengthen links of RE with Assembly provision.

S Flynn Feb 2015