

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

held on Monday, 9th March 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

at The Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

Present:

Mr. C. Hopkins (Chairman)
Councillor Barker
Councillor Craddock
Councillor Phillips
Councillor Robertson
Mrs. S. Blackmore
Mr. P. Prasadam
Ms. Louise Evans
Ms. K. Donnellan
Mr. D. Lomax
Mrs. B. Groombridge
Mr. R. Simmons

In Attendance

Ruth Burgess (Black Country Co-ordinator for Near Neighbours)
Councillor Nawaz

Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Lane and Mr. D. Thakker.

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Ms. K. Donnellan to her first meeting.

Late items to be introduced by the Chairman.

There were no late items to be introduced by the Chairman and SACRE noted the resignation of Father M. Leadbeater.

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

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

Minutes

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October, 2014 were submitted:

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October, 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(b) Strategy Sub-Group – 4 February, 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February, 2015 were submitted:

(See Annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the Strategy Sub-Group meeting held on 4 February, 2015 be noted.

Action Plan Update

(a) Feedback on engagement with schools and future developments

Mr. Flynn informed members that engagement with schools presented a challenge and R.E. Today staff had good contact with primary schools. This matter had been presented to the Secondary Heads Forum who were keen for heads of R. E. to meet with Mr. Blaylock on the theme of 'British Values'; this would also provide an opportunity for heads of R. E. to network. In order to encourage attendance, the meeting proposed for June, 2015 would be free of charge to Secondary heads of R. E.; it was hoped that they would then meet on a regular basis.

Mr. Blaylock confirmed that the primary R. E. teacher network met on a termly basis and approximately 34 schools had been represented. The last meeting looked at 'art and religious education' and a grant had been made available to enable a free package of resources to be given out. Follow-up and twilight sessions would be held in order to reduce the cost of cover to schools. He informed SACRE that Anna Maeer of Rushall Primary School had won the NATRE Hockerill Prize for Innovation in R. E. for 2014.

(see annexed)

The primary network would continue and it was hoped that more schools would take part. Members asked for information on the schools which were already involved. In view of the concerns expressed by members at the lack of engagement with secondary schools, Mr. Flynn reported that he would be informing the next meeting of the Walsall Academy and Secondary Heads (WASH) on the benefits of engaging with SACRE. The Chairman informed members that the Director of Children's Services met regularly with Academy leaders; he agreed to raise this at their next meeting.

Councillor Barker suggested that a short summary of the networks available and benefits could be provided to schools by the Councillors who were involved with them.

Resolved

- (1) That the information provided be noted and that Anna Maear be congratulated on her success in the Hockerill prize winning innovation work.
- (2) That member be advised of the schools represented at the primary R. E. teacher network meetings.

Review of Agreed Syllabus – timeline/plan/process and implications of changes to R E

Mr. Blaylock confirmed that the Agreed Syllabus had been reviewed and implemented from September 2010 and was now due to go through the process again. The Syllabus was valid for 5 years and the review usually took a considerable period of time. In view of changes to the National Curriculum and that assessment was now outcome based it would be necessary to carry out a full review. He outlined various aspects of change that would need to be taken into consideration during the review and suggested that a working group be set up consisting of 2 primary, 2 secondary and 1 special school representatives, bearing in mind cover costs, to enable the work to progress. The working group would work alongside R E Today and set the direction for content, R E Today would write up the draft Syllabus. After discussion, it was

Resolved

- (1) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of SACRE setting out a plan and time line with a view to developing a new Agreed Syllabus over the next year;

- (2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of SACRE to enable an Agreed Syllabus Conference to be established;
- (3) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of SACRE setting out details of a budget to enable the review of the Agreed Syllabus to take place including details regarding the proposed working group.

Near Neighbours programme

The extract from the email from Councillor Robertson and grant criteria and guidance 2014 were submitted:

(See annexed)

Councillor Robertson introduced Ruth Burgess, Black Country Co-ordinator for Near Neighbours to the meeting. Councillor Nawaz also attended the meeting to put forward community views.

Ms. Burgess outlined the funding available from the Department of Communities and Local Government aimed at promoting the Community Cohesion agenda; the aim of the project was to bring together communities with different faith backgrounds to build up friendships and relationships. The two categories considered for funding related to 'social action' and 'social interaction' e.g. community gardens, sports groups, cooking clubs. There were already a number of projects taking place in Walsall.

The grants were usually in the region of £3,000; for grants of £5,000 a business case would be required and could be used for equipment but excluded salaries. There was no deadline for applications and the process was usually completed within approximately 6 weeks.

Councillor Nawaz confirmed that the understanding and diversity of different faiths was most important; he was of the view that there appeared to be a 'gagging order' about radicalisation but schools should allow young people to consider these issues. He referred to the possibility of 'twinning' churches and mosques to allow a greater understanding between young people of different faiths and enable the discussion of ideas without the fears that could exist.

Councillor Nawaz was invited to address the Committee. He stated that Walsall would soon become a priority area rather than a supported area which would increase the focus on Walsall and on children and their comments; this would be challenging for schools. He stressed the importance of SACRE working with

Churches and Mosques; he referred to UMO and multi faith forum. There were 18 mosques in Walsall.

Mr. Flynn confirmed that other groups were members of SACRE and were invited to the meetings; he stressed the importance of people being able to articulate without the fear of being labelled.

Ms. Burgess confirmed that applicants for grant aid were not required to be an organisation. She referred to their national partner and to the fact that 'The Feast', working in Birmingham was trying to encourage young people from different faiths living parallel lives to engage with them. It was hoped that this could be introduced to Walsall; 'The Feast' would require funding and their service related to young people in the secondary school age range.

She also referred to the 'Catalyst' training programme for young people, which was a free service aimed at 18 years old and above.

The Chairman referred to the need for members to speak to their respective groups on this matter.

Councillor Robertson thanked SACRE for receiving the presentation.

Resolved

That the information be received and Members alter their respective groups on the availability of funding for appropriate projects.

One-Day conference for primary and some secondary pupils – 22 May, 2015 – update

Mr. Blaylock referred to last years' conference hosted by Aston Villa and informed members that the conference this year was aimed at Walsall Schools only and ten schools would be invited to send up to eight pupils each and two secondary schools would be invited to bring some older students to work as learning helpers to assist the younger pupils. SACRE would pay for the lunches. A report would be submitted to the next meeting. Information on the event would be provided to the press.

SACRE Annual Report

Resolved

That this item be deferred to the next meeting.

Feedback on Trojan horse Seminar

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

Mr. Flynn highlighted to content of the report.

Mrs. Blackmore informed SACRE that she had also attended the conference, the content of the report was different to the information reported in the media, it was about awareness of where problems could occur and about stopping them.

National Society Statutory Inspection Reports

Mrs. Blackmore informed SACRE that the inspections were linked to the Ofsted outcome which looked at the impact on children.

(a) Christ Church C.E. Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The National Society Statutory Inspection report was submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the National Society Statutory Inspection report on Christ Church C. E. Voluntary Controlled primary school be noted.

(b) Blue Coat C. E. Junior School

The National Society Statutory Inspection report was submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the National Society Statutory Inspection report on Blue Coat C. E. Voluntary Controlled junior school be noted.

Correspondence from Lord Nash, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Schools

Correspondence from Lord Nash was submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the correspondence from Lord Nash be noted.

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman

Date.....