

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

At a meeting of the **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)** held at County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 16 January 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Councillor W. Daley
Chairman, in the Chair

COUNCILLORS

Crosby, W.
Pidcock, B.

Thorne, T.N.

TEACHER'S ASSOCIATIONS/UNIONS REPRESENTATIVES

Naylor, Ms. C.

Shaw, Mrs. H.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES

Bainbridge, Mrs. E.

REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER CHURCHES & FAITHS

Van Der Velde, Mrs. D.

CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES

Dearlove, S.

Wardingham, Ms. M.

ACADEMIES' REPRESENTATIVE (observer)

Gibson, S.

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OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

P. André
D. Cookson

Mrs. A. Todd

Part-time RE Consultant
Commissioner for Secondary
Education
Democratic Services Officer

26. MEMBERSHIP

Members welcomed Aidan Gillespie to the Northumberland Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education as the Quaker/Society of Friends representative and hoped to see him at the next meeting.

Members also welcomed Caitlin Naylor to the meeting of the Northumberland Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education as a new Teacher Union representative. Members were informed that Caitlin was an RE teacher at Ponteland High School.

It was brought to the attention of the SACRE that the Teacher Union representatives were usually appointed from their respective Teacher Union. Annual meetings of the Teacher Unions would shortly be taking place and representatives to sit on the SACRE would be nominated once again.

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from A. Duffield, C. Hudson, Mrs. J. Cousin, Rev. E.H. Marley, Bhakti Rasa Adhikhara and A. Gillespie.

28. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 10 October 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

29. AN UPDATE OF CONTACTS WITH SCHOOLS AND TRAINING PROVISION

The SACRE members received an update from Mr Phil André, RE Consultant, about his provision of RE in-service training and contacts with schools since the last related meeting (a copy of which is filed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the report be received.

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30. NORTHUMBERLAND SACRE NEWSLETTER

(a) Members received a copy of the 39th issue of the Northumberland SACRE Newsletter, dated January 2019. It was noted that the newsletter would be circulated to all schools and published on the schools' website (a copy of which has been filed with the signed minutes).

Members discussed how schools viewed the newsletter and commented on the costs involved if they were to print a hard copy of the document in colour.

RESOLVED that the newsletter be received, with thanks extended to those involved in its production.

(b) Consideration was given to the arrangements for the articles to be included in the next edition of the SACRE Newsletter, Issue No.40, for April 2019.

Suggested articles for inclusion in the next newsletter:

- Findings of the RE Survey
- Longhorsley and Whalton HMD Event

A member advised that following the RE Conference a number of ideas had been brought to her attention by teachers for inclusion in the newsletter, which included:-

- Useful links to resources, funds and courses available
- A big question article to improve thinking skills
- Drawing attention to the forthcoming important festivals by highlighting that they could be good ideas for assemblies

Members were reminded that any copy articles were to be received in Word format documents, A4 portrait size and any accompanying photographs to be in jpeg format, and sent to Mr. André for proof-reading by the end of March. The aim was to have the next newsletter printed for distribution in schools in April 2019.

RESOLVED that the position be noted.

31. NASACRE ISSUES

(a) **The NASACRE Newsletter – SACRE News– Issue 21**

Members received the NASACRE Briefing No. 21, for information (a copy of which has been filed with the signed minutes).

Members welcomed the content and information provided in the NASACRE newsletter. In response to a query regarding government funding it was advised

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that the Northumberland SACRE received £7000 per year which equated to 0.22% of the central school budget.

Reminder of web site link: www.nasacre.org.uk for other interesting articles.

RESOLVED that the NASACRE Briefing No. 21 be received.

32. STATUTORY ANNUAL NORTHUMBERLAND SACRE REPORT FOR 2017/18 ACADEMIC YEAR

Members of the SACRE received a copy of the (draft) statutory Annual Report of the Northumberland SACRE for the 2017/18 academic year (a copy of which is filed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

It was noted that the distribution list on page 22 was an incorrect duplication and would be removed from the document. The format and layout of the report was set by NASACRE and had followed the same presentation as previous years.

Referring to the HMD event held at County Hall it was noted that further work was being undertaken to improve attendance at this year's event.

One SACRE member felt that the report should have spoken more about relationships, how to achieve more lasting relationships and include more politics and political understanding.

It was advised that Northumberland continued to show improvement in education, especially in first and primary schools, and had now entered the list of best-performing local authorities for first and primary schools. There were still concerns over the future of RE in the county's secondary and high schools but, as seen at the RE Conference, teachers were enthusiastic and many felt suitably trained and equipped to deliver RE.

RESOLVED that the:-

- (a) Annual Report of Northumberland SACRE be agreed.
- (b) Action Plan be discussed at the next meeting of the SACRE.

33. SURVEY OF RE PROVISION

(Report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

Members received a summary of the recent data collated following the questionnaire sent to all schools about RE and collective worship prepared on behalf of the SACRE. A copy of the full report was also circulated at the meeting and filed with the signed minutes.

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It was reported that 27 schools had responded to the survey. It was interesting to note that no Roman Catholic schools had engaged with the research project. It was stated that contact would be made with the Roman Catholic diocesan education advisor to discuss the survey. It was suggested the summary document be amended to show which schools with a religious designation had responded to the survey.

Overall the information collated had been very informative with some good examples of RE and collective worship in schools. It was agreed that the survey findings should be widely circulated and a thank you extended to those schools that had responded. It was stated that the good examples shown in schools in the county should be celebrated and published as a good news story by the Council's Communications Team.

A member raised a concern about the increased presence of the Far-Right, particularly in the south-east of the county and queried whether a question on this should have been included in the questionnaire. It was confirmed that the survey questions had only related to RE and collective worship. However, within schools there were a number of clear policies on this issue because of the Prevention Agenda.

It was suggested that additional time was needed to consider the full report and that it should be added to the next agenda as a discussion item. It was also suggested that Members discuss at the next meeting what action they would like to take following on from the findings of the survey.

RESOLVED that this item be brought back to the next meeting for consideration.

34. RE EXAM RESULTS

The recent RE exam results were presented (a copy of which has been enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D). It was noted that the number of entries at GCSE level continued to fall in line with national figures. However, there were still one in four students sitting an RE or RS exam at GCSE. There were no national comparisons yet but once these had become available they would be shared with all.

Members were advised of the pressure on schools which had led to some subjects such as RE, Music and Art being deemed not as important as others since the introduction of the English Baccalaureate. This was a national trend that the SACRE had been aware of for a number of years. A number of teachers were also reporting that the new RE GCSE did not adequately prepare them for the A Level RE exam.

It was reported that at Ponteland High School, like many schools, they were trying to promote RE as an option at both GCSE and A Level. It was stated the biggest

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obstacle to overcome, when advising students on the advantages of sitting the examinations, was for them to understand how RE could assist with their career path. It was suggested that an article could be created by the Council's Communication Team, using Ponteland High School as an example, to promote and raise awareness of studying for an RE qualification.

It was noted that a number of schools did not have any students sitting RE at GCSE. It was suggested that some work needed to take place to understand the reasoning behind why some schools have not offered the subject. It was suggested this be brought back to the next meeting to discuss the findings.

With regard to A Level results, there was a slight decrease in the number of entries but overall the results were good. However there were far fewer schools offering A Level RE compared to those offering RE GCSE.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the information be noted.

(b) an item be placed on the next agenda to discuss the RE offer within schools.

35. 2020 CREWE CONFERENCE

The SACRE received for information a report from Chris Hudson who attended and presented a seminar at the 2020 Crewe Conference which took place on the 13 -14 October 2018 (report filed with the signed minutes as Appendix E).

Members thanked Chris for producing the report.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

36. SACRE CONFERENCE

The SACRE discussed the successful RE conference that had taken place on 16 November 2018.

All attendees had enjoyed the day and the evaluation forms had all been very complementary. Discussions were to take place about the next SACRE Conference. Those who attended had welcomed the proposal of arranging a bus trip to visit houses of worship so teachers could see for themselves the benefit of arranging such trips for their pupils.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

37. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY (HMD)

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Members were provided with a verbal update of the arrangements being made for hosting the Holocaust Memorial Day event in County Hall, Morpeth on Thursday, 24 January 2019.

It was noted that the event would focus on the theme "Torn from home." It would feature poems and readings from young people from Voices Making Choices, as well as a presentation from refugees who had made their home in Northumberland. The event would start with the raising of the Holocaust Memorial Day flag at 3.45pm and a blessing from Rabbi Lipsey and followed by a commemoration event in the council chamber from 4pm. It was reported that Northumberland had succeeded in purchasing a Holocaust Memorial Day Trust purple flame flag.

It would be once again open to all staff. This year's event has been widely publicised and staff would not need to take flexi in order to attend. It was hoped this would increase the number of people attending the event compared to the previous year.

As part of this year's event there would also be some special film screenings at the Fuse Cinema, Prudhoe on 29 January 2019 and 30 January 2019. The screenings would be free and open to the public.

A copy of the poster that had been created to advertise the event was circulated at the meeting. It was advised that the poster would also be sent to all County Councillors.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

38. URGENT BUSINESS

A concern was brought to the attention of the SACRE regarding recent correspondence that had been received from a school which had cancelled its trip to a house of worship. The school had stated that its governing body had deemed the visit costs outweighed the benefits to their students. Trips to houses of worship were extremely rewarding to both teachers and students and it was hoped that this was a one off. Members discussed the email and confirmed that they were not aware of many schools which sought agreement from their governing body before authorising trips but stressed how enriching schools that had visited in the past had found these trips.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and officers discuss this issue outside of the meeting.

39. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Northumberland SACRE be held on

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Wednesday, 24 April 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

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