

Minutes of the meeting of the East Sussex SACRE, held on 26 February 2007

Present: Mr B Devaux (NASUWT), Mr K Fossey (Buddhist Community), Councillor J Garvican, Mrs C Gravestock (external RE consultant), Mrs C Hughes (School Improvement Service), Mrs M Hughes (Diocese of Arundel & Brighton), Mr M Lloyd (C of E), Councillor M Lock, Mrs P Lock (C of E), Councillor R Martin, Mrs J Ottley (NAHT), Mr M Relf (New Churches), A Tindall (Religious Society of Friends), Dr B Vance (URC)

Also attended: Regan Delf, Ruth Henson and Carol Wilkinson for Item 3

Action

Talk by Alex Tindall on his book “The Sources of the Message”

Alex Tindall gave a talk on his recently published book which, he clarified, had taken him 20 years – on and off – to research. The book examined the sayings, parables and teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, and shed insight on them in the light of the original Greek New Testament text and other Jewish documents. Alex explained that passages which **reported** on what Jesus said had been deliberately excluded, as had the nativity, passion and crucifixion stories which merited separate research.

The deeply Jewish nature of Jesus and his listeners was emphasised, and the importance of an understanding of the age in which he lived in order to appreciate the true meaning of his message. To illustrate this, Alex gave examples of standard parables and their sometimes very different meanings when put in their Jewish context.

Copies of the book were available for colleagues to buy. Councillor Garvican thanked Alex for his informative and entertaining talk.

1 Welcome and apologies for absence

Councillor Garvican welcomed colleagues to the meeting. Apologies were received from Derek Bastide (C of E), Jill Bell (NUT), Peter Frere (Unitarian Church), Richard Saunders (C of E), Rabbi Vivian Silverman (Jewish Community), Councillor Richard Stogdon and Rebecca Stutters. Colleagues were notified of Rebecca’s serious illness in hospital and good wishes were sent.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2006

- 2.1** Attention was drawn to the omission of Richard Saunders’ name from the list of those giving apologies for absence. Otherwise, the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

3 RE and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development for looked after children (LAC)

- 3.1** Regan Delf, Head of Inclusive Learning and Development for the School Improvement Service, and colleagues from the Looked After Children

Service, Ruth Henson and Carol Wilkinson, were welcomed to SACRE.

- 3.2** Ruth, Education Adviser for looked after children, and Carol, Operations Manager for the Fostering Service, outlined their roles. Carol clarified that upwards of 80% of LAC are in foster care in East Sussex, and highlighted the duty in the Children Act to promote and respect individual religious faiths and beliefs.
- 3.3** Although the proportion of LAC is very small compared to non-looked after children, a high proportion have statements of special educational needs and behavioural problems. Looked after children not only include those looked after in the care of East Sussex, but also those from other Authorities who attend our schools. A summary of the numbers of LAC and their various placements was tabled.
- 3.4** The vulnerable nature of the looked after children group was stressed and the crucial importance, therefore, of corporate parenting.
- 3.5** Questions were invited, and it was clarified that looked after children have access to the same curriculum and timetable as all children. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that access could be variable if children were often absent from school. However, attention was drawn to the focus of the School Improvement Service on provision for vulnerable children, and the very strong foundation for RE and SMSC for all children in all schools in East Sussex.
- 3.6** Clarification was sought on what, as a county, we are not doing well and the obstacles to provision for LAC. Poor attendance was highlighted, as was low literacy and numeracy results which the Service was currently focusing on. Additionally, the impact of trauma on learning was highlighted which, it was reported, was being looked at.
- 3.7** Particular attention was drawn to the stigma surrounding children in care, and the need for all those involved with them to be sensitive to this. A recent LAC Awareness day, organised by looked after children, had delivered some very powerful messages.
- 3.8** Regan Delf reported that, although the integrated Children's Services Department had made a significant difference to outcomes for looked after children, there was still a long way to go. There was a need to provide support, and to work with parents, at a much earlier stage, in order to provide stability as early as possible.
- 3.9** The value of SACRE receiving future Scrutiny Committee reports, and details of LAC performance against county targets, was agreed. Pat Lowne undertook to investigate this and to arrange to circulate any reports received with future SACRE agenda papers.

PL

4 SACRE constitution

- 4.1** It was reported that revisions to the constitution had been discussed at the last meeting, but that no decision had been taken because the meeting was not quorate. The proposed draft constitution was tabled, with amendments shown in italics, which members were asked to consider.

4.2 **The quorum**

It was clarified that the quorum would be an attendance of one third of the **current** membership of any group. In order to make this clearer, it was proposed to add the words “**as actually constituted**” to the relevant bullet point, and to include the required quorum number against each representative group. It was clarified that the quorum for Group B, for example, would be 1.

4.3 It was proposed to remove the word “**normally**” from the bullet point.

4.4 **Size of representative groups**

In response to a query, Charlotte clarified that, provided the requirement to have four representative groups was met, SACREs were free to decide on the size of those groups. The guiding principle was that they should be roughly representative of the local area.

4.5 **Group A**

It was proposed to remove the qualifying clause.

4.6 The proposed amendments to the constitution, together with the additional proposals (above), were put to the vote which was carried unanimously.

5 **Local update**

5.1 Charlotte referred to the self-evaluation visit reports in RE which had been circulated, and reported that nine of the ten visits planned had been undertaken. Schools visited included both Community and Controlled schools, and were selected for various reasons, eg prior to an Ofsted inspection or following In Service training.

5.2 In addition, it was confirmed that diocesan reports on Aided schools were available on both diocesan websites. The slightly different emphasis of diocesan inspections on the Christian character of schools was highlighted.

5.3 **Secondary schools**

Attention was drawn to the very encouraging visit to Hillcrest School in Hastings.

5.4 **Primary schools**

Charlotte highlighted the following findings from visits:

- **Assessment:** Key issues emerging were when and how to use the levels in the Agreed Syllabus, and the importance of the skills highlighted in the Syllabus for ongoing assessment. This highlighted a potential training need for next year.
- **Change in subject leader:** Arrangements for handing over to a new subject leader were in some cases inadequate. This could hopefully be improved by, for example, sending more than one person on In Service training, and occasional whole school planning.
- **Small schools:** Difficulty was often experienced in giving enough time to sufficiently develop RE, as teachers have multiple curriculum responsibilities.

- **Non-specialist teachers:** Increasingly, non-specialist and unqualified teachers are teaching RE, which highlights a training need.
- **Negative attitudes:** Evidence of parents' and teachers' negative attitudes – even in some Controlled schools – is not uncommon. The need to support schools experiencing this, and to provide appropriate training for staff, was highlighted.

5.5 It was reported that schools have found the written reports helpful and, as they identify good practice, there is potential for better sharing of good practice.

6 Faith Communities Partnership project

6.1 Charlotte clarified that the intention of visits to schools is to provide something over and above the content of RE lessons which is stimulating for both pupils and adults. Charlotte reported on the five visits which had taken place to date.

6.2 The aim of building up a permanent team of visitors did not seem likely to be achieved, due to factors such as illness. The challenge, therefore, was to constantly find new people. It was hoped that one possible source would be the Eastbourne Deanery conference for teachers on 25 June. It was suggested that the project might help to fund supply cover to enable teachers to attend the conference.

6.3 Support for the project was confirmed. However, the need for sensitivity on the part of visitors to the circumstances of individual pupils was highlighted.

7 Report on Buddhism Awareness event

7.1 Charlotte reported that the event had been illuminating, extremely successful and well attended, and thanked Kevin Fossey for the major contribution he had made.

7.2 The event had also provided Charlotte with some visitors for the Faith Communities Partnership project.

7.3 Colleagues were requested to give some consideration to the focus for the next Awareness event before the next SACRE meeting in June.

ALL

8 Feedback from QCA/NASACRE meeting

8.1 Charlotte reported that she and Councillor Garvican had attended the meeting. The main issues of note were the self-evaluation tool for SACREs, and the proposed new format for reporting to the QCA, which was currently being piloted.

8.2 In addition, initiatives and topics from other SACREs had been shared. Charlotte tabled a digest of activities from other SACREs and asked colleagues to consider before the next meeting whether any of the more general activities might be undertaken in East Sussex.

ALL

9 Any other business

9.1 SACRE quality mark

In the context of schools' self-evaluation in RE, it was suggested that SACRE might consider offering an award or quality mark. It was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting in June.

9.2 Venue for SACRE meeting, 21 June 2007

It was confirmed that this would be held at the East Sussex Training and Development Centre (formerly the Community Learning Centre) at St Mary's House in Eastbourne.