

## Minutes of the meeting of the East Sussex SACRE, held on 21 June 2007

**Present:** Mr B Devaux (NASUWT), Dr T Durgahee (Eastbourne Islamic Cultural Centre), Mr K Fossey (Buddhist Community), Councillor J Garvican, Mrs C Gravestock (external RE consultant), Mr M Lloyd (C of E), Mrs P Lock (C of E), Councillor R Martin, Mr M Relf (New Churches), Mr R Saunders (C of E), A Tindall (Religious Society of Friends), Dr B Vance (URC)

### Action

#### **1 Welcome and apologies for absence**

**1.1** The meeting opened with a few moments of quiet reflection. Councillor Garvican welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1.2** Apologies were received from Ann Bassett (Salvation Army), Derek Bastide (C of E), Jill Bell (NUT), Peter Frere (Unitarian Church), Maureen Hughes (Diocese of Arundel & Brighton), Connie Hughes (School Improvement Service), Councillor Lock, and Rebecca Stutters (Baha'i Community). Colleagues sent their best wishes to Rebecca who, Charlotte Gravestock reported, was still far from well but now out of hospital.

#### **2 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2007**

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### **3 National/local update**

**3.1** It was agreed to re-order the agenda, and start with the national update as there were a number of current national issues which were likely to impact on the rest of today's agenda. Further details are attached to the minutes.

#### **3.2 Proposals for a national RE Strategy**

Reference was made to the proposals put forward in March by the RE Council for England and Wales, which included teacher training, Continuous Professional Development, and recruitment and retention. Charlotte informed colleagues that CfBT had won a DfES contract to work with subject-specific organisations to support the Secondary curriculum, and would be appointing a national RE subject leader and regional advisers who would be developing a programme of training for teachers. This would presumably link in with the proposed national strategy.

#### **3.3 Non-statutory National Framework**

It was reported that this has been 're-presented' in the RE section of the secondary curriculum review material on the QCA website.

#### **3.4 Debate on RE as a National Curriculum subject**

Charlotte drew attention to the recent media coverage on whether there should be statutory programmes of study for RE, and to Ofsted's suggestion about this in its recent report, 'Making Sense of Religion'.

#### **3.5 Ofsted report on RE ('Making sense of Religion')**

Attention was also drawn to the Ofsted findings that, although examination results were improving, this was not the case for teaching and

learning in RE, especially at Key Stage 3. Ofsted had raised questions about the use of two attainment targets and suggested that a skills-based approach (as in history and geography) might be more helpful. These were regarded as interesting comments in the light of the East Sussex SACRE's decision to combine the attainment targets and to promote a skills-based approach when the syllabus had been revised in 2005.

### **3.6 DfES consultation on promoting community cohesion**

- 3.6.1** It was reported that from September this year schools would have a duty to promote community cohesion, and that Ofsted would be looking for evidence of this. Colleagues' attention was drawn to the current consultation which was still open, although due to end shortly.
- 3.6.2** It was suggested that the consultation document would present a challenge for some East Sussex schools, due to the lack of diversity in some areas of the county. On the other hand, however, it was highlighted that the Romany culture in some rural areas did provide local diversity.
- 3.6.3** As well as valuing diversity, the draft guidance suggested that schools should 'promote common values'. Charlotte suggested that schools might have difficulty in understanding exactly what was meant by this. A full discussion followed on common and individual values and beliefs, both within faiths and within society. It was agreed that SACRE could usefully clarify the shared values held by its members which underpinned the Agreed Syllabus.
- 3.6.4** The value of SACRE as a whole considering the issues was agreed. In the meantime, any members who wished to respond individually to the consultation were asked to e-mail their responses to Charlotte by 28 June, who would forward a response by the deadline of 3 July.

ANY/  
CG

### **3.7 Local update**

#### **School self-evaluations in RE**

Charlotte referred colleagues to the reports on schools' self-evaluations which had been circulated with the agenda for information.

### **3.8 Eastbourne Deanery Conference, 25 June 10 am-3 pm, All Saints' Centre, Grange Road, Eastbourne**

SACRE colleagues were invited to attend the conference on the use of visitors in RE for all or part of the day. Anyone requiring lunch was asked to notify Charlotte.

ANY

## **4 Report of NASACRE AGM**

- 4.1** SACRE colleagues considered Brenda Vance's report which, it was agreed, gave a very good flavour of the day.
- 4.2** Brenda drew attention to the range of difference between individual SACREs nationally, and stated that our own compared very favourably with others.
- 4.3** In response to a query as to whether there had been clear indication at the AGM of the likelihood of a national RE curriculum, Brenda reported that this was still a matter of some debate. Concern was expressed that the

	<p>current trend of a lack of questioning and dialogue amongst teachers could be attributed to the introduction of the national curriculum. It was highlighted, however, that there is evidence to show that teacher training is promoting the need to be ‘individual’.</p>	
4.4	<p>Brenda confirmed that the AGM had been a valuable experience, and any SACRE members interested in attending in future were invited to do so.</p>	ANY
5	<p><b>SACRE quality mark</b></p>	
5.1	<p>Charlotte referred to the suggestion at the last meeting for SACRE to formally recognise the work in RE in East Sussex schools. It was clarified that there would be no potential conflict between Ofsted and SACRE judgments, as the SACRE award would be given for a specific project, rather than for the whole of RE.</p>	
5.2	<p>Martin Lloyd reported on the Diocesan quality marks, which gave individual schools public recognition, as well as a certificate and a small monetary award. Martin emphasised that the awards were given for outstanding projects which made an impact.</p>	
5.3	<p>It was suggested that a panel of four, perhaps representing each of the four SACRE groups, could be formed, and that schools could be invited to enter for awards in specific areas. It was agreed that Charlotte would explore the possibility of taking this forward.</p>	CG
6	<p><b>Future SACRE initiatives/activities</b></p>	
6.1	<p>Suggestions for future SACRE activities included a <b>briefing on cults</b>, to enable SACRE to provide advice to schools, and talks by Kevin Fossey on <b>teacher training in RE</b> and <b>the establishment of a school for Nepalese street children</b>.</p>	
6.2	<p>Charlotte undertook to investigate the briefing on cults with Inform, which is based at the London School of Economics.</p>	CG
6.3	<p>It was confirmed that Elizabeth Peirce, an author of multi-faith collective worship materials, would give a talk at the next SACRE meeting in October.</p>	
7	<p><b>SACRE Awareness Event, 2007</b></p>	
7.1	<p>Colleagues considered options for the focus of this year’s Awareness Event. It was agreed to focus on RE in schools, targeting school governors, and to include the contribution of individual faith communities to RE as well as highlighting the work of SACRE.</p>	
7.2	<p>The value of holding two local events – possibly in Lewes and Hastings – was agreed, given that people were disinclined to travel far in the evenings in November. Charlotte undertook to take this forward.</p>	CG
8	<p><b>SACRE meeting dates, 2007-08</b></p>	
8.1	<p>The following dates and venues were confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 October 2007, County Hall, Lewes 1.00 pm lunch; 2.00 pm meeting</li> </ul>	

- 14 February 2008, Uckfield Civic Centre  
1.00 pm lunch; 2.00 pm meeting
- 17 June 2008, St Mary's House, Eastbourne  
1.00 pm lunch; 2.00 pm meeting

### **Agenda item 3**

#### **National update**

Much has been happening in the RE world.

In March 2007 the RE Council of England and Wales (REC) put forward proposals for a National Strategy for RE to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State, Lord Adonis. These are wide-ranging proposals including initial teacher training, continuing professional development for serving teachers and recruitment and retention of teachers.

In the last week or so CfBT Education Trust has won a contract with the DfES to work with subject specific organisations (in our case, the National Association of Teachers of RE, NATRE) to provide materials and training to support the secondary curriculum. This project is linked to a major review of the secondary curriculum that is currently being undertaken by the DfES and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). CfBT will be appointing a national RE subject leader who will be supported by a number of regional RE subject leaders.

There is new material on the QCA website relating to secondary RE, again in connection with the secondary curriculum review. The non-statutory national framework is referred to and is described on this site as being 're-presented' rather than 're-written'.

A question that has arisen throughout these developments is the local/national debate: 'Is it time for RE to have statutory national programmes of study and become a national curriculum subject?' (See the reference to this question in Dr Vance's report on the NASACRE AGM.)

Finally, Ofsted has just published a 40 page report entitled 'Making sense of religion: a report on RE in schools and the impact of locally agreed syllabuses.' The report highlights weakness in RE at Key Stage 3 in particular and also the formulaic approach to passing exams that is sometimes evident at Key Stage 4. It expresses dissatisfaction with the range and content of accredited courses. It questions whether RE should continue to be a compulsory subject post-16. It suggests that the non-statutory national framework could become the statutory basis for local agreed syllabuses or the basis for a national curriculum for RE. The latter would mean there would be no need for local Agreed Syllabus Conferences but SACREs would still have a role as multifaith, even interfaith bodies, and would be expected to make a strong contribution to 'community cohesion'. Interestingly, in view of our own revised syllabus in which we arrived at similar conclusions, the report suggests that the 2 attainment targets in the non-statutory framework are not helpful for assessment and that a skills-based approach might lead to higher standards. The report says repeatedly that RE should address the changing social significance of religion in the modern world.

