

## Minutes of the meeting of the East Sussex SACRE, held on 14 February 2008

**Present:** Rev D Bastide (C of E), Mr B Devaux (NASUWT), Mr K Fossey (Buddhist Community), Councillor J Garvican, Mrs C Gravestock (RE consultant), Mrs C Hughes (CfBT), Mrs M Hughes (Diocese of Arundel & Brighton), (Mr M Lloyd (C of E), Councillor M Lock, Councillor R Martin, Mr M Relf (New Churches), Mrs R Stutters (Baha'i Community), Dr B Vance (URC)

**Also attended:** Mr J Leeson

### Action

#### **Talk by Kevin Fossey on his work in Nepal, and as a teacher trainer at Brighton University**

Kevin spoke to colleagues about his role in Initial Teacher Training at Brighton University, which involves teaching RE to approximately 180 students as part of the BA (Hons) Primary Education module in Geography, Art and RE. Kevin highlighted how students are shown how they can make links across the curriculum, for example in geography by linking India with Hinduism, and the significance of where people live in relation to their religion.

Kevin then outlined how, through links with refugees during his headship of a Junior school in Brighton in the 1980s, he had come to undertake teacher training in Nepal. This had resulted recently in his helping to set up a school in Kathmandu for street children.

Kevin informed colleagues that he was hoping to take groups of his university students to Nepal as part of their course. He said that the RE component proved very popular with students, and that he felt that they understood how the subject contributes to children's spiritual development (and their own).

Councillor Garvican thanked Kevin for his most interesting and thought-provoking talk.

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

- 1.1** Councillor Garvican extended a welcome to colleagues, and invited Mr John Leeson (a Humanist and former chair of a SACRE), attending as a member of the public, to introduce himself.
- 1.2** Apologies for absence were received from Jill Bell (NUT), Ruth Brinkman (Religious Society of Friends), Peter Frere (Unitarian Church), Pat Lock (C of E), Imam Dr Sajid (Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony UK), Richard Saunders (C of E), Fiona Sharpe (the new Jewish Community representative replacing Rabbi Silverman) and Councillor Stogdon.

#### **2 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2007**

- 2.1** The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

#### **2.2 Matters arising**

##### **2.2.1 Talk at a future SACRE meeting**

Councillor Garvican reported that acquaintances of his from the Quicken

Trust who were involved in a village regeneration project in Uganda, which had links to Sussex schools, would be pleased to give a talk to SACRE. It was agreed that Pat Lowne would contact them to arrange a date for the talk.

JG/PL

### **3 National and local update**

#### **National update**

#### **3.1 Report on QCA/NASACRE Conference**

- 3.1.1** Charlotte Gravestock informed colleagues that she had attended the annual conference, as had Derek Bastide on behalf of Brighton & Hove. Charlotte reported back on each of the main speakers, and on the group discussions which had focused on community cohesion and the contribution of SACREs.
- 3.1.2** **Jim Knight, keynote speaker**, had referred to the patchiness of standards in RE across the country and the need for consistency, and promoted the non-statutory national framework to SACREs when reviewing their syllabuses.
- 3.1.3** Delegates were informed that Circular 194 on RE and collective worship was being reviewed, beginning with RE. Charlotte highlighted that SACRE could expect developments in the next year or so.
- 3.1.4** Jim Knight had also reported that there would be Government funding to support RE amounting to £1m over 4 years for on-line materials.
- 3.1.5** **Dave Francis, the lead subject officer for RE**, had reported on a disappointing take-up at the nine regional conferences.
- 3.1.6** He had highlighted that, in his experience, RE was being marginalised in Secondary schools in which the Head of Department had not been involved in developing the new Secondary curriculum. Charlotte reported that this was happening in some East Sussex schools, and reported confusion between the use of locally agreed syllabuses and the non-statutory framework. Charlotte clarified that schools should still be following the agreed syllabus, and referred colleagues to the 'Frequently Asked Questions' which had been tabled and which would be available for schools on Czone.
- 3.1.7** **Mark Chater, from QCA**, referred to guidance which had been produced on annual reporting to QCA, and also to recently published guidance on how to use the non-statutory national framework in agreed syllabus review. Both of these guidance documents were available on the QCA website.
- 3.1.8** **Joyce Miller, a former RE adviser in Bradford**, had reported on a "schools linking" website which was now available, and which would be useful for schools.
- 3.1.9** Joyce had raised a number of questions, including:
- Is RE a form of counter-terrorism?
  - How does RE relate to the rest of the curriculum?
  - Where are we being taken and by whom?
  - What will RE be like in the future?

Charlotte highlighted the importance of these questions, especially as SACRE would be reviewing the East Sussex syllabus in two years' time. She said that a key consideration at that time might be the amount and quality of exemplar materials in relation to the non-statutory framework. In particular, she felt that what was needed were examples of the 'big planning picture' at Key Stage 3 rather than isolated exemplar units, showing the overall direction in learning and continuity and progression across the key stage as a whole.

**3.1.10 Julie Grove** had reported on the current pilot training for minority SACRE members.

**3.2 Why Gandalf doesn't pick up the ring: the case for keeping local control of RE'**

Charlotte brought this article to SACRE members' attention, as she thought it was a well-written, clear article that raised important questions relating to the future of RE that were not often heard.

SACRE colleagues expressed concern about the likely future Government involvement in RE if it were to become a national curriculum subject. There was agreement on the need for local SACREs, who were in touch with local schools, to continue to have control of RE. The view was also expressed that little benefit would be gained from the proposed Government funding, which Charlotte confirmed would most probably be spread very thinly.

**3.2.1** In view of these concerns, it was proposed that a speaker should be invited to attend a SACRE meeting. Given that three different issues were involved, namely the local/national issue, the political move to RE for social cohesion, and the Key Stage 3 initiative, it was agreed that SACRE needed to be clear about what it wished a speaker to address. It was suggested that Mark Chater, who had an overview for all three areas, might be suitable, or Dave Francis for the Key Stage 3 initiative.

**3.2.2** The following motion, proposed by Councillor Lock and seconded by Councillor Martin, was agreed: "Due to concerns felt on receiving a report of the QCA/NASACRE annual conference, the East Sussex SACRE invites someone to attend to allay its fears and to clarify the role of SACREs." It was highlighted that it would be important for someone to attend **in advance** of East Sussex reviewing its syllabus.

**3.2.3** Concerns were expressed about the diminishing time given to RE in some Secondary schools, and clarification was sought on whether figures on this were available, what reasons were attributed for the reduction, and who was responsible for addressing the issue. It was agreed that it would be important for SACRE to look at the current state of Secondary education in East Sussex, and it was suggested that CfBT might be approached to help SACRE in clarifying the situation at Key Stages 3 and 4.

**3.3 Local update**

**3.3.1 Schools' self-evaluation in RE**

Attention was drawn to the reports circulated with the agenda for information.

**3.4 Report back on Governors' meetings**

**3.4.1** Charlotte reported that the meetings had been very well supported, and that positive evaluations had been received.

### **3.5 SACRE award**

**3.5.1** It was reported that no applications had been received to date, and it was suggested that this might be something for Charlotte's replacement to promote.

## **4 Discussion on arrangements for 2008 and SACRE priorities for 2008-09**

**4.1** Charlotte informed colleagues that officers from RE Today would be meeting with Connie Hughes and Bill Lyttle, the Head of the School Improvement Service, in April to discuss Charlotte's replacement through a contract with RE Today.

**4.2** Charlotte clarified that RE Today is the main RE professional organisation operating across the UK, which delivers training, writes and produces RE resources for use in schools, and has a wealth of advisers and associate advisers, including a likely replacement consultant who was based not far away. SACRE members were given her name but advised that, at this stage, there was no definite contract.

**4.3** Charlotte tabled details of the likely support from the contract, which was based on an allocation of 30 days, and colleagues' views were invited. There was general agreement that the time allocation needed to be increased in order to allow activities such as the annual Awareness events and attendance at the QCA/NASACRE conference to continue, and that activities such as the Czone development and school self-evaluation visits would benefit from increased time. It was emphasised that an increase in time would be cost-effective, in that it would result in longer lasting effects.

**4.4** It was agreed, therefore, to request support of up to 50 days, which Connie Hughes undertook to take forward. Charlotte agreed to revise the proposal in the light of SACRE's suggestions.

**4.5** Councillor Garvican expressed the wish to be involved in the discussions in March prior to agreement, hopefully, of the contract at the meeting in April. This should enable Charlotte's replacement to attend the next SACRE meeting in June.

## **5 Farewell to Charlotte Gravestock**

**5.1** Councillor Garvican paid tribute to Charlotte's commitment to SACRE over a number of years, to her depth of understanding, and to her capacity to relate to each of the very different members of the Committee. Her knowledge and wealth of experience which she had shared had been greatly valued.

**5.2** Councillor Garvican presented Charlotte with a plant and a card from SACRE colleagues, and expressed the wish that she would return to SACRE from time to time.

**CH  
CG**

**5.3** Charlotte thanked colleagues and said how much she appreciated all that they had done. She confirmed that she was particularly pleased to have secured the strong possibility of the services of an expert colleague to take over the work.

**6 Next SACRE meeting**

**6.1** This was confirmed for 17 June 2008 at St Mary's House, Eastbourne. The pre-meeting talk would be given by a speaker from Inform on the subject of cults, with specific reference to Scientology.