

Minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference / Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

02/10/2024 – MS Teams

Present

Name	Role/Representative	Initials
Bev Petch (Chair)	Senior Education Improvement Adviser	BP
Cllr Heather Delaney	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr HD
Donna Grosvenor	Teacher, St Mary & St Margaret's CE Primary	DG
David Harris	Education Adviser – Catholic Schools	DH
Cecil Knight	Methodist Church representative	CK
Michael Lancashire	Humanist representative	ML
Cllr Annette Mackenzie	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr AM
Afifa Tufail	Solihull Muslim Association	AT
Cllr Wazma Qais	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr WQ

Apologies

Alison Badger	Alderbrook School	AB
Ian Carnell	Birmingham Diocese	JS
Cllr Keith Green	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Cllr KG
Paul Wilkinson	Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-Day Saints	PW

Note taker: Kim Sherlock (KES)

There were several members who did not attend today's meeting - no apologies were received.

Consent was sought and given by attendees for today's meeting to be recorded.

BP welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that she was hoping to cover some SACRE business, but the Agreed Syllabus Conference part of the meeting was most important for members to start making decisions about the new agreed syllabus. She was keen to get more professionals to join SACRE, particularly at this time when looking at the review of the current agreed syllabus and anticipated that this could be around next April or May.

Several people were unable to attend the last meeting where BP talked about training opportunities for new members. KES sent out details for new members to join a training session with NASACRE. AB from Alderbrook School attended the “*So, you’ve joined your local SACRE...*” training and DG had also attended some training in the summer term which she found to be very informative.

Following on from the presentations held at the March meeting, BP reiterated that the current syllabus is more than five years old and now needs reviewing. This is a legal requirement for SACRE who should advise the local authority of the reviewed or updated agreed syllabus.

BP had previously met with a group of primary RE subject leads who were keen to have the right resources to support the pedagogy in terms of teaching and learning in the classroom. Some of them said they would be willing to become involved with the process of the revised agreed syllabus.

BP stated that there needed to be a deep dive into the three options that were presented at the last ASC. She felt that no one on SACRE was particularly focused on the Birmingham option, which was very complex and not the right way forward for Solihull. Representatives agreed with this. Coventry and Warwickshire’s AS would take a long time to embed in schools due to the lengthy period required to prepare schools for the new agreed syllabus. She wanted to be more pragmatic in getting something into our schools as soon as possible.

The other option was from RE Today and she provided members with an example of their support to a SACRE in Worcestershire of an agreed syllabus. CK had looked through the document and felt it had a great frame of reference into world views.

BP said she thought RE Today was the best option and had spoken with Worcestershire Council who were very open and said that their schools liked the previous version that they had produced and were very much of the opinion that they wanted very little change for their reviewed agreed syllabus.

She informed members that Solihull needs an agreed syllabus that is bespoke, and this is what RE Today can deliver on. Worcestershire’s agreed syllabus has all key stages, but for RE Today to cover this for all Solihull primary schools, including academies, the cost for an electronic version would be just over £4,000.

At a recent NASACRE conference, BP said there were several local authorities who have used RE Today, including Devon, Hampshire and Norfolk and said she would be happy to speak to some of the chairs to see what their opinions of RE Today are.

ML asked if supplementary materials for teachers are included in the price. BP thought there is a type of scheme of work which identifies appropriate resources/ideas for activities, but this would be of an additional charge.

DG said she had attended training from the Birmingham Diocese, and from this training she now had access to Understanding Christianity, published by RE Today.

BP said she would go back to RE Today to be clear about what the costs include. Once she has got a full understanding, she will ask them to send an e-mail so that members are updated on the latest information.

She said that one of the useful things about RE Today is that they are based in Birmingham so can easily be contacted. They could be invited to our SACRE and agreed syllabus conference meetings to keep us up to date, and members could really start to gain confidence in what their offer looks like.

BP reiterated that it has been a struggle to get funding to support SACRE's work but that it is a local authority duty to do so. She has another meeting next week and felt that the LA would not have the funding beyond £4,000 to purchase the scheme of work that sits underneath the agreed syllabus. It might be yes to buying in the agreed syllabus for all our schools, including academies, but schools would have to purchase the schemes of work themselves – as they do for other subjects on the curriculum.

ML asked that depending on the conversation next week with the LA, could SACRE use their weight to ask RE Today if we are going to instruct our schools to solely use their syllabus, could they potentially sell supporting documents to schools at a lower price?

DG said she had seen Sandwell's agreed syllabus which had been written by RE Today, and their agreed syllabus included all the supplementary work. It had a very different look to the Worcestershire's one which goes back to the idea of it being bespoke for each SACRE so Solihull could potentially personalise theirs. She felt it important to know that our agreed syllabus will be designed solely for Solihull to include a humanist view that SACRE members want to push forward.

BP said that perhaps SACRE members write a letter to the local authority stating that this is a statutory duty and we need commitment to this work because our children and young people in Solihull deserve high quality RE in school. RE is a subject that is often overlooked, but it is a legal requirement for all pupils to be taught RE.

DG asked BP as part of her conversation with Worcestershire, if she could ask the question around how their schools have managed to fund this. Perhaps this might help in phrasing the request for money. BP said she would contact them via e-mail initially and then have a further conversation with them.

CK said if members potentially met with RE Today by the end of October, the next stage would be to consult with a sample of Solihull schools between now and the end of December. These findings could be presented to a meeting in January/February and formally adopted.

DG had found sample schemes of work on the RE Today website. Their primary schemes of work are £560 and secondary £240.

BP had talked with headteachers who are concerned about their finances, so this is an unprecedented time in terms of the financial situation that schools find themselves in. Cllr WQ said that timing is very important when schools plan their budgets.

BP felt members now have a potential way forward. She could send out a Microsoft form with key questions for schools to respond to around the new agreed syllabus and give them the opportunity to add free text into the survey, not just multiple-choice questions.

She said that her consultation with a group of RE primary subject leaders and teachers had worked well on Teams which took a lot less time and capacity. This group were excited about the idea of a new syllabus that would help them with their teaching as well as being clear about the concepts that are being taught.

BP asked members if they wanted to include early years to key stage 4 in the new agreed syllabus. There was agreement that we need the new Agreed Syllabus will cover early years through to key stage four.

DH said that even if we thought about as early as key Stage 1, we look at the objectives with associated materials, and for secondary schools where there are subject specialists, they have the ideas to flesh it out themselves using their expertise. This could be a cost saving measure, so we are being supportive, but we are also giving that freedom to secondary school teachers.

BP asked members if anyone is interested in joining a meeting that she will organise with RE Today to send KES an email (kssherloc@solihull.gov.uk). A maximum of three people would be sufficient for the meeting.

She also talked about electing a vice chair and asked for nominations from members via email by the end of **Friday on 25th October**. BP and KES will look at these after half term and send out a nominations list separately to everyone via email.

BP thanked everyone who attended and will send out the date and time of the next meeting when the minutes are sent out. The meeting closed at 17:45.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm.

I confirm that these minutes are a true and accurate representation of the Agreed Syllabus Conference meeting.



Bev Petch, Chair of Solihull SACRE, 2/10/2024