

**WEST BERKSHIRE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2016**

VENUE: ST NICOLAS SCHOOL, LINK ROAD, NEWBURY RG14 7LU

Present:

Group A – Other Faith Members

None

Group B – Faith Members

Revd Mary Harwood (C of E)

Group C – Teaching Association Members

Mr Bernard Eggleton (NASUWT)

Group D – WBC Councillors

Councillor Pamela Bale (WBC) and Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge (WBC)

Also Present: Ms Alison Harris (Independent Consultant), Clare Nolan (NASUWT), David Taylor (Thatcham Baptist Church) and Jo Watt (Appeals Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Billy Drummond (WBC), Councillor Sheila Ellison (WBC) and Mr Robin Sharples (C of E)

Absent: Mr David McKay (Buddhist), Mrs Sue Plackett (NAHT) and Mrs Maria Pratico (C of E)

9 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2016 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The SACRE currently have no members from Group A (Christian denominations and other religions). With no one in attendance from Group A, the meeting was officially not quorate. It was agreed however that the meeting would proceed without being quorate.

10 Matters arising from the Minutes

Matters Arising:

Keith Harvey provided an overview of the 2016 West Berkshire Religious Studies (RS) GCSE results (details attached to the minutes). The committee noted that 68.4% of students in West Berkshire achieved grades A* - C in RS GCSE as compared to 74.5% nationally. The results for this grade range varied greatly across the West Berkshire Schools, with the lowest percentage being 48.5% (John O'Gaunt) and the highest being 93.5% (St Bartholomew's). The Committee was pleased to note that the percentage of West Berkshire students who received an A* in RS GCSE was 10.8% which was higher than the national average (10.5%).

The Committee noted that progress had been made with the SACRE membership. The details were discussed under Agenda item 4 – Membership update.

11 Membership Update

The Committee discussed the membership of SACRE and noted the following:

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- The membership of Group A (Christian denominations and other religions) was the biggest issue as there were currently no representatives in this group and as a result, meetings of the West Berkshire SACRE were not quorate.
- Catholic faith representative – Mrs Lucy Gallagher had volunteered to represent the Catholic faith and support had been received from the Portsmouth Diocese and the local Parish Priest for her to do so.
- Free Church representative – The Committee welcomed the Reverend David Taylor, from Thatcham Baptist Church. Reverend Taylor had agreed to attend the meeting to learn more about SACRE with a view to joining the Committee.
- Hindu faith representative – Keith Harvey had sent a letter out to his school parents asking for expressions of interest. *Post meeting note – KH has confirmed he has a parent interested in representing the Hindu faith. Jo Watt advised that written support would be required from the relevant Hindu body before the Council could make the official appointment.*
- Muslim faith representative – Keith Harvey confirmed that one of the St Nicolas School parents had said they would be interested in representing the Muslim faith on SACRE. *Post meeting note - Jo Watt advised that written support would be required from the relevant Muslim body before the Council could make the official appointment.*
- Jewish faith representative – the Committee noted that no progress had been made with this and further investigation was required.
- Co-opted/ union representative – the Committee welcomed Clare Nolan, RS teacher from Little Heath School. It was hoped that Clare would join the Committee as a co-opted member to act as the conduit between SACRE and the Secondary RS teachers network. To appoint Clare officially would require SACRE to change its constitution to allow one Primary Union representative and one Secondary.

Action – Upon receipt of the necessary paper work, Jo Watt to produce an Individual Decision report to formally appoint the new members as listed above.

12 Budget and SACRE action plan for the coming year

Budget

The Committee noted that the annual budget for SACRE was £4,120. The following expenditure for 2016/2017 had already been spent:

- £750 to St Nicolas Church of England Junior School for 3 x ½ days (1 per big term) support from Keith Harvey.
- £1,700 to Wokingham for Pan Berkshire Hub for the services agreed
- £140 to Wokingham for contribution to SACRE hub conference – 28th September 2016

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Action – Alison Harris to speak to Jo Fageant to see if there was any outstanding expenditure from her work as the SACRE consultant. *Post meeting note – Alison Harris confirmed there is no monies outstanding to Jo Fageant.*

Action plan for coming year

The Committee discussed the action plan for the forthcoming year and decided that the focus of the West Berkshire SACRE should cover the following:

- Work to ensure that school children visited other places of worship. Clare Nolan appraised the Committee of the trip she had been organising for Little Heath pupils to visit two places of worship in London (planned for March 2017).
- It was felt that some form of questionnaire would need to be sent to the schools to ascertain the current practices in place in terms of visits to other places of worship. Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge suggested that this might be something that School Governors and their networks could help with as well.
- Work around keeping various networks going. It was noted the Primary RS co-ordinators did meet but the committee was unsure if the Secondary RS co-ordinators met. This issue was considered further under Agenda item 6.

13 Support work with teachers e.g. network meetings

The Committee agreed that one of their actions for the forthcoming year, should be supporting the various teachers networks that were in place to support RS in West Berkshire Schools. The committee noted that Catherine Jinkerson had been appointed to co-ordinate the Crossing the Bridges Project between the 6 pan Berks SACRES. It was hoped that, time allowing Catherine would be able to attend one of Alison's network meetings with a view to moving forward the visiting places of worship project.

Action – Alison Harris to speak to Jan Lever about how much of the remaining budget could be used to help support the networks.

14 Annual Report

The committee noted that the Annual Report of the West Berkshire SACRE had to be ready to be presented to West Berkshire Council in March or May 2017. SACRE would be meeting again in February 2017 and would then have the opportunity to review the annual report before it went to Council.

Actions:

- **Alison Harris to speak to Jan Lever to provide a quote for the production of the annual report. Alison Harris to speak to Jo Fageant with regard to a template for the annual report. *Post meeting note – Jan Lever has submitted a quote for this piece of work to the budget holder at West Berkshire Council. Jan Lever also has an Annual Report template that could be used.***
- **Jo Watt to add the West Berkshire SACRE annual report to the Forward Plan for Council in March 2017. *Post meeting note – Jo Watt has completed this action.***

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15 Progress with the Hub Initiative

Alison Harris gave an update on the Hub conference which was held on 28th September 2016.

The committee noted that:

- The conference was very well attended
- Jan Lever had provided an update on the latest work of the Hub
- Catherine Jinkerson would be working on a directory of contacts/hosts following the soon to be held host training. This would involve engaging with faith communities to ensure the most up to date information was included.

Alison Harris said that there was nothing further to report on the Crossing the Bridges project.

Following a question from Bernard Eggleton, Clare Nolan confirmed that she had used the SACRE guide to visiting other places of worship.

16 Any Other Business

The timing of future meetings:

Jo Watt informed the group that she had been asked to confirm the dates of the 2017/2018 SACRE meetings. It was hoped that all the Local Authorities in Berkshire could hold their meetings at similar times of the year.

Councillor Pamela Bale reported that Mrs Lucy Gallagher would not currently be able to attend meetings in the late afternoon and requested that at least one of the future meetings take place in the evening.

The Committee agreed that they would continue to meet three times a year and as follows in 2017:

- 28th February 2017 at 4.30 pm at St Nicolas Church of England Junior School, Link Road, Newbury.
- 27th June 2017 at 6.30 pm at West Berkshire Council or Thatcham Baptist Church.
Post meeting note – Jo Watt has booked Committee Room 2 at the Council Offices should it be required.
- October/November 2017 (date TBC) at 4.30 pm at St Nicolas Church of England Junior School, Link Road, Newbury.

Farmington Institute Scholarships

The committee agreed that details of the scholarships should be circulated to RS teachers/Headteachers via the various networks. If possible, examples of past projects should also be circulated to illustrate the benefits of the scholarships.

Action – Alison Harris to investigate this further.

Understanding Christianity

The Committee noted that the Diocesan plan was yet to be finalised. Further training days had been organised for the Autumn term. The cost of the training would be

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approximately £235 for schools within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and more for those schools who did not participate in the SLA.

Elect new Chairman/Vice-Chairman

The Committee noted that the election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the West Berkshire SACRE should have taken place at this meeting. This was not possible as the meeting was not quorate.

Academies and Post 16 RS

Following a question from David Taylor, the committee noted that Academies were required to teach RS but they were not required to follow the locally agreed syllabus, although most of them did.

The Committee noted that all schools were required to provide a minimum of 6 hours RS tuition per post 16 student per academic year. Following examples given by Clare Nolan, the committee noted that this could be delivered in a variety of imaginative ways and could also include the philosophy of RS. The committee noted that in some areas, additional UCAS points were offered to students as an incentive to continue with RS studies.

17 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that the next meeting would be held on 28th February 2017 at 4.30 pm at St Nicolas Church of England Junior School, Link Road, Newbury.