

**Minutes of the Oxfordshire SACRE Meeting
held at County Hall, Oxford,**

Monday 13th November 2023, 4.00 pm

Present:

Committee A: World Faiths, Christian Denominations

Steve Beegoo
Jessica Edwards
Sarah Montagu

Committee B: Church of England

Peter Foot
Christine Price-Smith

Committee C: Teacher representatives

Nigel Fancourt: Chair
Christian McGuinness
Helen Norman

Committee D: Local Authority

Councillor Bob Johnston

Co-opted

Shahin Bekhradnia

In attendance

Sam Bartholomew (Local Authority)
Helen Batten (Clerk)
Bill Moore (Advisor to SACRE)

Apologies

Giles Beck (C)
Arzhia Habibi (co-opted)
Rae Hancock (C)
Elizabeth Pitkethly (B)
Sue Scott (B)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (D)

1 Welcome & preliminary items

- NF welcomed members to the meeting.
- Quorum was confirmed.
- Apologies received were accepted.
- No substantive items of AOB had been notified.

2 Minutes of 29th June 2023

Minutes were approved without amendment.

3 Appointment of Chair & Vice Chair

Nigel Fancourt and Bob Johnston confirmed their willingness to continue as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. Both were duly re-appointed to serve a further term until the Autumn 2024 meeting, and members thanked them for their ongoing service.

4 Updates from the previous meeting

4.1 Induction training, September 2023

Sarah Montagu and Christine Price-Smith provided some feedback from the recent online sessions, which provided a useful opportunity for new and more experienced members to talk about various aspects of SACRE. Bill Moore confirmed that the training can be repeated if required.

4.2 Annual Report 2021-22

The final report will be sent to the Department of Education, NASACRE and other recipients. **Action: Bill Moore will circulate a distribution list for information.**

4.3 SACRE constitution 2023

The final version incorporating further requests from the LA was discussed. It was clarified that committee B members collectively represent the dioceses listed. It was agreed to amend the term of office to four years in line with council appointments and, subject to this alteration, members approved the 2023 Constitution.

5 Plan of work 2023-24: The document *Three year plan & 2023-24 action plan* was noted and progress against the various items was discussed:

- Bill Moore advised that the RE networks should be operational by Spring 2024.
- Approval of the constitution enables various membership matters to move ahead. It will be important to improve representation to better reflect the diversity of communities in Oxfordshire. It is intended that new members will be recruited through the formal channels of faith groups, but personal contacts can also be considered.
- Bill Moore clarified that provision of information to headteachers follows feedback from teachers highlighting some challenges in ensuring that school leaders understand the importance of RE. An ideal approach would therefore include heads and governors and involve a general introduction followed by more detailed briefing. **Action: Sam Bartholomew will undertake some research and discuss further with Bill Moore.**
- A discussion around funding followed. Members noted that there has been no increase in the SACRE budget since 2011 and lack of LA funding is limiting what SACRE can achieve. It was therefore agreed that a bid for increased funding will be considered. Confirmation of any budget increase will be required before the February 2024 meeting, which will need to draft the 2024-25 action plan.
- **Action: Sam Bartholomew will advise the process for applying for additional funding.**

6 Annual Report 2022-23

The first draft was discussed. BM advised that the February meeting will look at the final version, including validated school data, before submission to the DfE by mid-March. **Action: Members will provide any further comments to Bill Moore by 20th December.**

7 Agreed Syllabus

- Sam Bartholomew confirmed that the 2023 syllabus has been distributed to all schools, and will be shared once more, with some guidance to ensure that its importance is fully understood.
- Discussion about support for schools followed. Bill Moore advised that feedback from RE teachers indicates they would welcome some further training on implementation of the syllabus. Christine Price-Smith advised that church schools are well-supported by Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) on these aspects, and ODBE advisors are also working with some multi-academy trusts that contain a mixture of schools. It was recognised that the main concern is therefore to ensure adequate support for maintained schools that are reliant on the LA, and a multi-layered approach including RE teachers and school leaders will be required.
Action: Sam Bartholomew and Christian McGuinness will make contact with headteachers to identify RE training needs and advise further.
- **Action: Bill Moore will provide an update on RE networks to the next meeting.**

8 Newsletters

BM advised that the November REFocus is being prepared, and reminded members to provide any information for inclusion as soon as possible.

9 NASACRE support & training programme

Members were reminded that the training subscription covers attendance of all NASACRE training sessions. Sam Bartholomew, Peter Foot and Christine Price-Smith will attend the collective worship workshop session on 20th November and provide feedback to the February meeting.

10 National updates

10.1 RE hubs: Members noted the RE hubs website information.

10.2 National Content Standard for RE: Nigel Fancourt and Bill Moore introduced the documents, emphasising that the NCS aim is to ensure the quality of RE delivered in all schools, rather than determining its content. In discussion it was noted that some concerns have been raised about the general shift towards standardisation which risks diminishing the role of local communities in decision-making. The next meeting will discuss these developments further.

10.3 Interfaith Week: Information about the 2023 event had been circulated previously. Members were pleased to hear that some schools have been making use of the SACRE website information to contact faith groups regarding visits etc.

10.4 Teacher training bursaries for RE: Nigel Fancourt provided an overview of the national situation and Bill Moore commented that RE frequently deals with controversial topics and high-quality teacher training is therefore essential. Steve Beegoo suggested that schools may be able to take advantage of government funding that is currently available for development of resources for use by Oak Academy (national online resource). **Action: Sam Bartholomew will ensure that schools receive this information.**

11 Responding to the impact on schools of events in Israel and Gaza

The impact on local communities was discussed and Sarah Montagu advised that the Jewish community has prepared some guidance material which is being distributed to schools. Sarah Montagu also introduced Solutions Not Sides which works with schools and other organisations to enable young people from all backgrounds to engage in positive discussions. Bill Moore confirmed that the newsletter will include links to resources, and it will also be helpful to determine if teachers would like any further support.

12 Updates from members

Shahin Bekhradnia advised that an event in Oxford during March 2024 will look at different aspects of slavery, including modern slavery as mentioned at the June SACRE, and further details will be circulated.

13 AOB

Introductions were completed for new members.

14 Next meeting

The next meeting will take place at 4.00 pm on 28th February 2024, venue to be confirmed.

Nigel Fancourt thanked everyone for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 5:50 pm.