



Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

MINUTES

14.11.19

Bengal Palace

- 1 **Reflection** David Downer gave a reflection on “Practice makes Perfect”. Copy Attached

Attendance

Committee A

Members representing the “Free Churches”

Two members representing the Roman Catholic Church

Sister Stella Kelly

Mrs Alison Burt

Members representing non-Christian faiths

Dr. Lionel Alexander (Jewish faith)

Mr. David Downer (Buddhist)

Mrs Anne Sechiari (Buddhist)

Mrs Norma Corney (Baha'i)

Mr. Abdul Basith (Muslim)

Committee B (4 members in total)

Representing The Church of England

Rev. Sue Paterson

Mrs Beryl Miller

Committee C (4 members in total)

Representing the teachers of the Isle of Wight. Nominated by appropriate groups.

Secondary Miss Beth Feltham The Bay C E School

Head teacher Mrs Nicky Mobely All Saints CE Freshwater

Committee D (4 members in total)

Representing the Local Authority. Two elected Members. Two nominated by the Director of Education

In attendance

Harry Kirby Clerk/Coordinator

Dr. Patricia Hannam Professional Adviser to Isle of Wight SACRE.

Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS)

County Inspector/Adviser RE History & Philosophy

2. Apologies for Absence

Debbie Andre (CC), Brian Tyndall (CC), Ebrahim Jeewa (Moslem), Praful Thacker (Hindu), Kirstie Thomas (Teacher), David Harrison (Quaker), Sue Cox (Free Churches)

3. **Declaration of Members' Interest and Chair's correspondence**
 - None
4. **Minutes of the Previous meeting held on 20.06.19**
 - Accepted as true record. Proposed NC, seconded LA
5. **Matters Arising from the minutes of 20.06.19**
 - The planned training did not take place. A new date 13.01.20 has been arranged. 15.30 at The Bay Academy
 - Monitoring Group. The planned meeting did not take place. PH reported that the RE sections of the websites of the Island's secondary schools were improving.
6. **Development Plan**
 - PH has up-dated this and 'RAG'd the various elements. Youth Voice is now green.
 - At a recent Secondary phase network meeting the following was planned:- 4 students (Year 9) from 4 High schools will meet on 2 Thursdays. The draft agenda includes a range of topics including philosophical discussions; a panel to pose questions to; possible video questioning; an opportunity to share ideas and experiences; each school could lead a different section of the day.
 - Monitoring will be dependent on funding.
 - Headteacher briefings will be done via HIAS
7. **Membership update**
 - David Harrison is suffering ill health and will seek a replacement representative for the Quaker Community.
 - There was a discussion concerning Free-Church representation. AB will approach a lay minister t colleague (Methodist?). **Action AB**
 - NM will approach a Congregational friend. **Action NM**
 - HK reminded colleagues that the new LA Rep had never attended SACRE . PH will pursue the LA representation with the Director, especially focusing on the 2 "members nominated by the Director". Members will consider possible suitable nominees. **Action PH**
8. **Monitoring Report**
 - Nationally 71% students achieved 4+ grade. IW results are not yet available to make a comparison.
 - PH updated SACRE on the new OFSTED inspection process and it's change of focus. NM reported on OFSTED's recent emphasis on "Whole child education experience" rather than just data.
 - One Island Primary school is now out of RI and is rated Good. RE was not mentioned in the report.
 - Another Primary OFSTED report includes comment that RE teaching "does not help pupils to remember important knowledge". Members were informed that this inspection was carried out early in the school year soon after moving into a new building.
9. **Annual Report**
 - PH explained the heading concerning "Determinations" in the report. It was decided to establish a small group to define a process in the event of SACRE being required

to consider a school's application. The working group will consist of BF,BM,NC with HK and PH .

- The draft report was accepted by SACRE after minor amendments and subject to the Chairman's Foreword and the addition of the Development Plan. Prop.DD Seconded NC.
- The next NASACRE AGM is on 18th May 2020. As usual, it is hoped to send representatives to this London-based event.

10. Review of LD111 2020-2021

- SACRE agreed to use the same system as 2016 when deciding to review IW's Agreed Syllabus. The ASC will take place at the beginning of the next SACRE meeting (17.03.20). PH and HK explained the process and members were reminded that SACRE must be quorate to carry out this process.
- Once the review has been agreed PH envisages that the same reviewing and writing procedures as previous, will take place.

11. RE Council

- PH explained that the RE council is the umbrella body for over 100 faith groups. There is on-going discussion concerning the name of the subject. Either "RE" or "World Views of Religion". A conference in June 2020 will discuss this further.

12. NASACRE

- PH emphasised the importance of NASACRE as an invaluable resource available to SACRE members. She reminded members of the password recently distributed by HK

13. Any Other Business

- HK reminded members of the forthcoming SC Hub meeting in Winchester on 27.11.19. He emphasised the importance of IW representatives attending and offered transport to anyone wishing to attend.
- Members expressed their appreciation of the welcome and generous hospitality given by staff of the Bengal Palace Restaurant.

14. Date and venue of the next meetings

- 17.03.2020 Medina or Carisbrooke High School (TBC)
- 18.06.2020 A Newport Primary school (TBC)
- 05.11.20 County Hall

SACRE Reflection November 2019

There is a popular saying "practice makes perfect". I recently heard a modified version of this which instead says "practice makes perfect, so be careful what you practice".

We talk a lot about practice. As examples, there is practice for sport, practice for exams and education, religious practice, and of late mindfulness practice.

Practice, in the generally accepted sense, implies that we are doing something to move us towards some kind of final goal which will be as close to being perfect as possible. We expect to reach this goal somewhen or

another, and we spend an awful lot of our energy planning how to reach the goal, how we will spend our time reaching it, how long it might take to get there, what obstacles might get in our way, and how wonderful it will be when we arrive.

The premise of this logic is that in some way what we are doing at the moment is only an imperfect contribution towards reality or perfection, which will arrive at some point in the future. As we all know, tomorrow never comes, but we behave as if that were not true.

It is very difficult to be always “in the present moment”, but that is exactly where we are. We cannot possibly be anywhere else. Our biggest difficulty, as human beings, is our capacity for so-called rational thinking, logical thinking, and need to plan a route to everywhere, including the future. Our western culture emphasises the need for setting goals and objectives. Whilst there is a need to do this, otherwise we would not have achieved all the things we have achieved, it almost becomes an absolute belief that this is the only way to live. The consequence of this is that in the present moment our minds nearly always become focused on how we might get to the fantasy we have just created in our heads, and while we are in that fantasy, we are not in the present moment. So it passes us by almost unnoticed.

As human beings, we love to create stories. This is fine when it is in the realm of amusement and fiction. The problem arises when we invent stories about ourselves and others, which we do so effectively that we forget they are stories. This is where the practice comes in. Having invented what appears to be a perfectly reasonable and rational story, we then practice it, and behave as if it were true. We practice towards achieving the story we have created for ourselves. This would be fine if the stories were based upon absolute truth. Often, we create a story for ourselves that says it is the absolute truth. How could it possibly be anything else?

The consequence of living this way is that we can overlook the possibility that there are other ways of perceiving existence, and that these ways might have more successful results in our lives and the way we live them than the endless pursuit of so-called rationality. One example of these is the ability we have when we drop the absolute clinging to logic, and to perceive things by what we might describe as “intuition”. I’m sure we have all experienced that moment when our stories have been dropped, and an unexpected answer emerges from somewhere.

The domain of the theories of quantum mechanics have revealed to us some quite startling suggestions about the way the universe might actually work. What we have taken in the past to be so-called “logical” are demonstrated to be incorrect and the assumptions they make mistaken. Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, which has long since been accepted and validated, says

we cannot know in advance anything at all for certain. We can know something about reality, but we cannot know it all until it actually occurs. No one has yet put forward any accepted description for why or how the emergence of reality occurs. Electrons do not actually exist until we attempt to measure them. Interaction between particles does not exist until they actually collide. Reality does not exist until we observe it. Prior to this moment they only exist as a possibility, and have no absolute reality at all!

All of this leads me into a sense of wonder about the extraordinary nature of existence. Human beings, needing some logic because of their inexhaustible desire for explanation, create all kinds of stories to explain existence, what it is, and how it came to be. Their stories are different. They all present what they see as logical explanations for their stories, and therefore declare their stories as being “truth”. They then often punish other human beings who will not accept their “absolute truth”. What difficulties this gets us in!

The universe is vastly more wonderful and inexplicable than any of these stories, however old, can explain.

What we need is to encourage a sense of this mysteriousness, a sense of inquisitive enquiry, and an open mind nurtured by an understanding about the stories we create, and where they originate, from inside our minds. Our minds are the source of everything, including the stories. Where are our minds? What is this “myself”?

Practice reflection on this.