

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 2 MARCH 2011

Attendance:

GROUP A - Religious traditions and Christian Churches

* Mr Zia Baig	<i>A Councillor Asad Omar</i>
~ <i>Mrs Martha Besser (Vice Chair)</i>	~ <i>Miss Fatema Rahemani</i>
* Mr Mike Bishop	* Mr Neville Ransley
* Dr Julie Crow	* Mrs Gill Ross
<i>A Mrs Niru Desai</i>	~ <i>Mr Shabban Saddik</i>
* Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal	* Mrs Doreen Samuels
* Mrs Mary Hale	~ <i>Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli</i>
* Mr Vijay Hirani	~ <i>Ven Sumana Sramaner</i>
~ <i>Dr Vinod Kapashi</i>	<i>A Ms Beverley Wilson</i>

GROUP B - Church of England

* Mrs Mary Abbott	<i>A Rev'd. Matthew Stone</i>
* Rev'd. Giles Pinnock	

GROUP C – Teachers' Associations

* Ms Bhavita Pandya	* Mrs Manju Radia
<i>A Ms Nancy Parsons</i>	* Mrs Alison Stowe (Chair)

GROUP D – Local Authority

Councillors:

<i>A Nana Asante (arrived 7.50)</i>	<i>A Camilla Bath (Vice Chair)</i>
<i>A Lurline Champagnie</i>	<i>A Nizam Ismail</i>
<i>A Bill Philips (Reserve)</i>	

Co-opted Members:

Seconded from the Harrow Student Advisory Board: vacancies

Also attending:

* Ms Rachel Bowerman (Senior School Improvement Professional & Adviser to SACRE, nominated by the Director of Education)

* Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

From Marlborough Primary School

Suzie Rook RE Coordinator

From Newton Farm Primary School

Srishruthi Thirumalai Yr 3 pupil

Gargi Dawle Yr 3 pupil

Rekha Bhakoo Head Teacher

~ denotes absence without apologies

** denotes presence*

A denotes absence

~ denotes absence without apologies

27. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Srishruthi Thirumalai and Gargi Dawle, year 3 pupils from Newton Farm Primary School who had come with their Head Teacher, Rekha Bhakoo to give a presentation. She also welcomed Suzie Rook, RE coordinator from Marlborough Primary School.

28. Apologies for Absence:

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Mr Mike Bishop, Mrs Niru Desai, Mrs Phiroza Gan-Gotwal, Mr Vijay Hirani, Cllr Asad Omar, Ven Sumana Sramaner, Rev'd Matthew Stone, Ms Nancy Parsons, Cllr Nana Asante, Cllr Bill Philips, Cllr Camilla Bath, Cllr Nizam Ismail.

The following members were absent without apologies: Miss Fatema Rahemani, Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli and Dr Vinod Kapashi.

There were no Councillor members present, so the meeting was not quorate.

29. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2010: (previously circulated)

The clerk drew members attention to a correction made in the latest version of the minutes, circulated with the agenda:

Minute 10 b bullet point 2:

Mr Mike Bishop informed members that progress has been made towards setting up street pastors - an initiative discussed at previous meetings . A visit has been made to look at an existing scheme and meetings are in progress to start the scheme in Harrow and Wealdstone town centres in the very near future.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2010, having been circulated and taken as read, were signed as a correct record.

RESOLVED: Minutes should be posted on the council website when they were circulated with the agenda for the next meeting.

30. Matters arising from the minutes not included elsewhere on the agenda:

There were no matters arising from the minutes

31. SACRE Monitoring Standards and Quality of Provision for RE in Harrow Schools

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Cedars Manor School Self-Evaluation

Mary Abbott, who as well as being a member of SACRE, is also Subject Leader for RE at Cedars Manor School, reported her evaluation of the school's provision for RE and the outcomes for learners. She tabled the draft SEF (familiar to members from Alexis Sobell's presentation last year) which she has completed for Cedars Manor. She took the committee through this document drawing attention to the following:

Context for RE in the school

At KS2 RE is taught by a HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant). Members expressed some concern at this. It is not clear what subject expertise she has, although her enthusiasm and commitment for the subject are not in doubt. A member of Group C (Teachers' Associations) raised concerns about TAs teaching RE. It was suggested that where RE is taught by TAs, often as part of the school's arrangements to cover teachers' PPA entitlement, this reduces the status of RE and the RE Curriculum. It was thought unlikely that any school would use HLTAs to teach other subjects. Teacher representatives also raised the issue of exploitation and accountability, as the HLTA is doing a teaching job but not being paid teacher's rates of pay. As far as Cedars Manor is concerned, the arrangement appears to work well but Rachel Bowerman advised SACRE that two of the key questions to ask are what RE-specific training the HLTA has received - for example in the implementation of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus – and whether school leaders have listened to pupils about the impact of an HLTA teaching RE across the school. Mary Abbott has only recently taken over as RE coordinator, so she has not yet monitored progress in any depth, but she has plans to monitor children's work and teachers' lesson plans.

Pupils' Achievement

The school has introduced level descriptors at KS2, although it was noted that they have adopted the national ones, intended as guidelines, rather than using those in the Harrow Agreed Syllabus.

On the basis of interim assessments, it is predicted that most children will attain a level 4 at the end of KS2. Rachel asked how this compared to outcomes in the core subjects.

At the Foundation Stage, pupils' profiles are used for assessment.

Mary Abbott regretted that SEN pupils are often withdrawn from RE in order to catch up on Maths and Literacy and SACRE members registered their own concern.

RE Related outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children often come in at a low level but they settle and achieve well. They are very enthusiastic.

Pupils' behaviour in RE

Their behaviour is good

Every Child Matters and RE

Children are happy and confident and willing to share with others.

Quality of teaching in RE

The SEF reported that when RE lessons had been observed, teaching had been judged as good. However, this was a small evidence base, as only two lessons had been observed. Assessments of learning and progress include taking into account pupils' contributions to class discussions as well as the levelling of a piece of work. Rachel Bowerman advised the school to decide a level based on a sequence of work rather than just one piece. Mary Abbott passed round examples of the children's RE work from Foundation Stage.

Rachel Bowerman thanked Mary Abbott for her presentation. There were then questions

about provision for children from non religious families and about how the teaching of RE supports and extends the curriculum.

Mary Abbott explained that discussions in RE are structured to ensure that all pupils can contribute because they are learning *about* religion. RE encourages respect for the beliefs and values of others. At the same time, children learn *from* religion because they are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and values in the light of what they have learnt about others'. They learn to recognise shared values. In this way, RE contributes to community cohesion.

There was discussion about the values promoted in single faith schools. Gill Ross explained that in her school, although they do not teach about other faiths, they can and do encourage children to respect other religions and learn about different cultures. She recommended that SACRE should encourage links between faith schools and community schools.

32. Celebrating RE: March 2011

A report from Newton Farm School on its presentation for the London celebration of this national festival for RE, at the Zoroastrian Centre on 24 March 2011

Srishruthi Thirumalai and Gargi Dawle gave a very well researched and immaculately prepared PowerPoint presentation on the Zoroastrian religion, covering the following aspects:

History

Zoroastrianism around the world

Present day Zoroastrians

Zoroastrian view of the world

Role of fire

The seven elements

A class trip to the Zoroastrian Centre in Rayners Lane.

The Chair thanked them for their excellent presentation, clearly spoken and excellently researched.

Srishruthi and Gargi then answered questions:

There are no members of the Zoroastrian community at their school. A year 3 class visited the Zoroastrian centre. When she saw the fire burning, Srishruthi felt excited. She enjoyed learning about its symbolism. Gargi had enjoyed the part where they rang the bell to ward off evil spirits. They had both been struck by certain similarities of ritual and symbolism with their own religion, for instance the plate full of fruits and the use of incense. They knew that frankincense also crops up in the Christian tradition in the nativity story. This also features in Zoroastrian traditions where it is held that the wise men came from Persia in the East and it is to the east, the source of light, that Zoroastrians pray.

In answer to a question about why RE is different from other subjects, Srishruthi and Gargi explained that they found it interesting to learn about the differences and similarities and how the different religions link together.

In answer to a question about how learning about religion helps us as individuals and links us as a community, the girls replied that learning about religions helps us to respect each other's religions. Rachel Bowerman explained RE is highly relevant to a new award sponsored by Unicef called "The Rights Respecting Schools' Award. Newton Farm have been pioneers in gaining this award, being the first in the borough and among the first nationally to achieve the top level within a year – a significant achievement.

The committee were very impressed with the girls' presentation and answers. Rachel Bowerman was confident that their presentation at the Zoroastrian Centre would be received with similar admiration. She thanked both the children and their Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher and asked if she might have a copy of their talk to send to members who were not present this evening. The presentation will also be videoed and can be viewed on the school website.

RE Month at Newton Farm

Rekha Bhakoo also added some information about RE month at Newton Farm. She explained that the school will be promoting pupil voice led activities. Speakers from different religions will give presentations and bring artifacts. Parents will also be invited and the children will work in mixed age

groups. She invited members of SACRE to attend: members should contact the school directly if they wished to do so. Manju Radia was looking for some representatives of the Muslim faith to come into school and other members of the committee were able to provide some names and contacts.

A report from Suzie Rook, RE subject leader, describing how Marlborough Primary is planning to join in celebrating RE and the intended outcomes of activities and visits.

Suzie Rook explained that she had taken over as subject leader for RE in September 2010. She tabled a booklet which sets out how Marlborough Primary School will be celebrating RE on 16 March. Class teachers in each year group have planned for RE-led activities for the day and the RE subject leader and the Deputy Head Teacher had supported their planning. There will be assemblies on the theme of festivals and guest speakers representing different faiths. Ideas have been developed from the Harrow Scheme of Work and the creative activities have been framed around three objectives from the Harrow Agreed Syllabus.

Suzie Rook is also the Enterprise Coordinator for her school, so she has taken the opportunity to combine some RE activities with business related ideas: for example, to create a construction company for the junk modelling/to be a TV studio developing a programme on prayer in different faith traditions.

Members of the committee were impressed by the wealth and inspiration of the ideas put forward. Suzie Rook then answered questions:

In response to a question from Rachel Bowerman about the preparation given to guest speakers, Suzie Rook explained that she would be meeting with them before the event in order to provide a focus on religious stories.

Rachel Bowerman also asked how parents had been involved and informed about the event. Suzie Rook replied that newsletters and parents' evenings have been used to keep parents informed. Posters and bookmarks will also be distributed before the event.

The Chair asked how many different faiths were represented in the school. Suzie Rook did not know exactly, but explained that many different faiths were represented, but that there is no predominant group.

Rachel Bowerman pointed out that the Marlborough 'RE Activity Day' booklet tabled earlier also gives a high status to the event. She drew members attention to the Year 5 lesson planning. Children would be learning about Ahimsa and how this was the motivation for Gandhi's policy of passive resistance and then reflecting on the motivation which underpins current principles relating to FairTrade and ecological pressure groups. Rachel commended the school on planning which was challenging and fully embodied the balance of learning about and learning from religion.

Rachel Bowerman thanked Suzie Rook on behalf of the committee and asked her if she would report back to SACRE after the event, via Gill Ross.

A member commented on how beneficial it is for SACRE to have this regular programme of reports and presentations by schools. It helps members to develop an overview of what RE teaching looks like in Harrow schools. Manju Radia added that the children had been very enthusiastic and couldn't wait to come to the meeting!

33. SACRE Leadership and Management

SACRE Chair's Group Meeting

Report of Chairs' Group Meeting held on 26 January 2011 (*minutes circulated previously*)

Rachel Bowerman took members through the minutes drawing attention to the following:

1. National event at the Zoroastrian centre: Rachel Bowerman thanked Bhavita Pandya who has been liaising with the four schools involved. The schools have been very enthusiastic and responsive. Rachel Bowerman will try and secure invitations for SACRE members for the event which is on the 24 March from 5.30 to 9.30pm.

2. Harrow SACRE's planned contribution to 'Celebrating RE': the Chairs' group has agreed to produce a protocol for visiting speakers and this will come to the full committee for approval.

3. Collective Worship: in response to a question about the current status of determinations, Rachel Bowerman confirmed that while schools are not currently being encouraged to apply for determinations, SACRE has a duty to receive and make decisions about any application for a determination that is submitted. It is a planned action of SACRE that it will develop new guidelines for school submissions for determinations, particularly in relation to the data required about the profile of its faith communities.

In response to a question as to whether members found the formation of the Chairs' group a helpful development, a member expressed the view that it was helpful for getting through business and bringing matters to the full committee in a well-formulated way.

In response to a question about communication between members and their chairs, Rachel Bowerman confirmed that the Chairs of groups were a conduit to their members both circulating documents for consultation and receiving suggestions for future agendas and that it would be helpful if Chairs did this by email.

34. Sacre Development Plan 2011-2014

Rachel Bowerman tabled a slightly updated version of the Development Plan which incorporated revisions made at the Chairs' Group meeting. One change is the date on the cover which has been extended to 2014, as members felt that the plan should run for three years.

Rachel Bowerman outlined some of the significant changes taking place in the educational world at the moment: the dissolution of the QCDA which had

previously had an RE Officer to promote RE within the curriculum, the changing relationship between LAs and schools and the expansion of academies – which will not be required to deliver the locally agreed syllabus. SACREs had never had the authority to intervene directly in schools but had been able to make recommendations to the LA regarding action required to improve RE locally or in individual; as LA teams shrank to a core with responsibility only for schools causing concern, there would be no capacity to implement SACRE's recommendations.

Gill Ross expressed the view that SACRE should urge NASACRE to lobby the government to increase the remit of SACREs to include the monitoring of RE in faith schools, free schools and academies.

Rachel Bowerman referred again to "Celebrating RE." She expressed a concern that if schools and LAs 'put on a good show' it might create the impression that RE is flourishing and well supported. She warned that as advisory support, which sought to keep RE high profile, disappeared, RE expertise in schools could suffer and RE be reduced to one-off events rather than a well-resourced subject of the basic curriculum.

It was agreed to keep this issue on the agenda and to put it forward for the NASACRE AGM which takes place in May or June. The Chairs' group will prepare a letter to send to NASACRE.

Action: Chairs' group

Rachel Bowerman explained that the five dimensions of the development plan are taken from the QCDA's guidance for effective SACREs and their self-evaluation. She took members through the plan. The plan will enable the committee to monitor SACRE's progress it also matches key expenditure to priorities. It was agreed that monitoring progress against the plan should be a standard item on future agendas.

The Chair thanked Rachel Bowerman for a very clear and useful document.

35. Reports from SACRE Partners

a) Harrow Inter Faith Council: Martha Besser reported that she has appealed for young people who might want to help to develop a website. She will draft a paragraph for Rachel Bowerman to place in the Gold Bulletin as it might make a good GCSE or A level project.

Action: Martha Besser and Rachel Bowerman

b) Faith Communities Mrs Doreen Samuels informed the Committee that the Limmud Day mentioned at the last meeting has now completely sold out. She will report back at the next meeting.

36. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

Date for the next meeting confirmed:
14 June 2011 at 7.30pm at the Civic Centre

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Mark Doherty at the Civic Centre has identified the following dates which are not scheduled for council meetings:
Autumn Term: 2011: 19 September

29 November
Spring Term 2012: 7 March

(Note: The Meeting closed at Time Not Specified).

(Signed)
Chairman