

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

Attendance:

GROUP A - Religious traditions and Christian Churches

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

GROUP B - Church of England

* <i>Mrs Mary Abbott</i>	* <i>Rev'd.Matthew Stone</i>
* <i>Rev'd Philip Barnes</i>	

GROUP C – Teachers' Associations

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

GROUP D – Local Authority

Councillors:	* <i>Camilla Bath</i>
	* <i>Nizam Ismail</i>
* <i>Nana Asante</i>	
~ <i>Bill Philips (Reserve)</i>	

Also attending:

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

Visitors

Zaitun Virani, EMA Project manager (Narrowing the gap)

From Belmont Primary School
Heather Harris, Head Teacher with 3 students

From Priestmead School
Jane Price, RE Subject leader with 8 students

* denotes *presence*

A denotes *absence*

~ denotes *absence without apologies*

14. Welcome and Introductions

Alison Stowe, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Zaitun Hirani, EMA Project Manager (Narrowing the Gap), Heather Harris, Head Teacher of Belmont School with three Year 6 pupils and Jane Price, RE Subject Leader from Priestmead School with eight Year 6 pupils.

15. Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Neville Ransley and Ven Sumana Sramaner.

Niru Desai had suffered injuries in an accident which had prevented her from attending recent meetings. Members joined in wishing her a speedy recovery. Apologies were received retrospectively from Mike Bishop and Vijay Hirani.

The following members were absent without apologies: Cllr Asad Omar, Fatema Rahemani, Paramit Singh-Kohli, Vinod Kapashi, Zia Baig, Nancy Parsons, and Manju Radia

16. Membership

Mrs Sanaz Ajala was attending on behalf of Mrs Martha Besser as the Bah'ai representative. There were no reserve members.

17. Rights Respecting Schools

Business Items: Improving standards in RE and collective worship

Rights Respecting Schools

a) Introduction: Zaitun Virani introduced this item explaining that it was UNICEF's mission to promote children's rights as listed in the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child). Their slogan is "Denying Children's Rights is Wrong: Put it Right."

Schools that undertook the Rights Respecting Schools Programme took on the following aims:

- Rights Respecting Values should underpin Leadership and Management
- The whole school community learns about the UNCRC
- All children are empowered to become active learners and citizens.

Zaitun Virani was pleased to report that thirty-six schools in Harrow have taken a strong interest in RRSA and four have already attained Level 1 . Benefits include:

- Positive relationships at all levels
- Global citizenship becomes more than a lesson
- Pupils develop self esteem and thrive as compassionate and rounded human beings
- RRSA joins up all aspects of provision, including the Every Child Matters objectives.

b) Presentation from Belmont Primary School

Heather Harris, Head Teacher of Belmont Primary School introduced her three Year 6 pupils, Aliasgar Amarali, Jodi Lam and Yalda Aieni. They are the school's RRS ambassadors. Belmont is proud to be one of the first schools to achieve level 1 of the RRSA. The pupils explained how the RRS permeates every aspect of school life:

Aliasgar introduced the work of UNICEF and explained why Belmont is doing the RRSA. They want Belmont to become a better place.

Jodi talked about the UNCRC and explained some of the 54 articles and how each right carried a corresponding responsibility.

Yalda explained how each class had made its own charter.

Heather Harris showed members two cards used by SMSAs with the children at lunchtime. These show that rights and responsibilities belong in the playground as well as in the classroom. They show how specific rights relate to corresponding responsibilities, for example, the right to healthy food, clean water and medicine carries a responsibility not to waste food.

Other examples include the right to education which carries a responsibility not to distract others and the right to let others think and believe what they want and to practise their religion which carries the responsibility to respect the beliefs of others. This last example was particularly relevant in the context of RE and Heather Harris explained how this right also included the responsibility to listen to others and understand that their point of view is as important as your own. The school links rights to everything they do.

In conclusion, members were shown a DVD made by Aliasgar which had been prepared for the RRSA assessment.

The school is very proud of its achievement so far and is now working towards level 2 of the award.

In response to a question asking how the RRSA had changed their lives, Aliaskar explained that the children are now committed and determined to follow the rights as set out in the UNCRC.

c) What might RE look like in a rights respecting School? *It was decided to consider this item after item 5 below.*

18. Provision for RE

Presentation from Priestmead School

Jane Price, RE Subject leader introduced this item and eight Year 6 pupils from Priestmead School. She explained how the school follows the Harrow Agreed syllabus. In year 5 they study a RE unit of work on places of worship. They have visited four places of worship, St Anselm's, their local church, Stanmore Synagogue, Watford Mosque and Bhaktivedanta Manor, Aldenham (the UK headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness). She explained that preparation for each visit had included use of the 'Espresso Primary' web-based curriculum materials for RE.

The children then described their visits and what they had learned.

St Anselm's: Kashmini and Janki explained what they had learnt about the Christian religion at St Anselm's. Using a doll, the priest had shown them how a baby is baptised; they had learnt about drinking wine from the Communion cup at the church altar. They had listened to organ music.

Stanmore Synagogue: Aditi described their visit to the Synagogue. They had learnt about key features of a synagogue, including the Ark, where the Sefer Torah is kept. They had seen the Rabbi read from the Torah.

Bhaktivedanta Manor: Aisha and Jeevan and Sujay described their visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor. The girls were shown how to wear a sari and all had had a ride in a bullock cart which was smelly but exciting!

Watford Mosque: Karina and Nirthika explained how they had been shown how women and girls cover their heads with a scarf. They had learnt about key features of the mosque, about salah (prayer) and wudu (ablutions before salah).

Jane Price added that the teachers had also found these visits very valuable. In response to a question as to whether it was easy to arrange visits, Jane Price replied that everyone they dealt with had been very helpful and welcoming.

In response to a question as to whether the children had a chance to visit other places of worship, Jane Price explained that they this unit of work is studied by every Y5 cohort. She said that the impact on children's learning was significant and children could remember accurately what they had learnt on their visits even after the long summer holiday. The pupils said that they learned more from visits and first hand experiences than they could ever learn in the classroom.

The children were also asked how it felt to learn about other faiths. How did this make them feel about their own faith? The children felt that it was

interesting to learn about other people's faiths; it gave a sense of understanding of what other people felt and promoted a sense of sharing.

In response to a question about whether there were any factors common to all the places of worship the children had visited, Rachel Bowerman called upon SACRE members to interpret some of the pictures included in the Priestmead presentation, in order to demonstrate a belief common to each of the faith traditions the pupils had studied: that humans are made equal in the sight of God.

- On their visit, children had seen that Muslims pray in straight lines facing the direction of Makkah. Cllr Ismail confirmed that Muslims pray, as they were taught to by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), standing shoulder to shoulder, no one member of the ummah (worldwide community of Islam) more important than another
- At Bhativedanta Manor the children all sat on the floor to eat their lunch. Bhavita Pandya explained that it is traditional for Hindus to sit on the floor in the mandir when sharing community meals in order to demonstrate equality.
- The children remembered that at St Anselm's believers all take wine from a communal cup.

Jane Price drew members' attention to the beautiful books that the children had made – these showed how learning extended beyond the four visits. She recommended members to look at them at the end of the meeting.

Phiroza Gan-Kotwal extended an invitation to visit the Zoroastrian Centre in Rayners Lane (Priestmead pupils study Zoroastrianism in Year 4) and Cllr Nizam Ismail offered to arrange a visit to the new Mosque in Wealdstone. These were welcomed by Priestmead.

Cllr Camilla Bath thanked the children for their beautifully spoken presentations. She had learnt a lot from them. She also thanked their teachers for arranging to bring them this evening.

On behalf of SACRE, the Chair thanked the children and their parents for attending.

The visitors then left the meeting.

4.c. What might RE look like in a Rights Respecting School?

Rachel Bowerman explained that RE teaching should be

- Authentic
- Present the beliefs and practices as they are perceived by the faith community
- Contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- Protect the integrity of pupils by ensuring that teaching is not about converting them to a religion or another religious denomination.

Rachel Bowerman felt that RE should not be about the 'naming of parts' but, if it was to have lasting impact on children's personal development, should concern itself with Big Questions. She tabled an example of Big Question RE planning. This scheme of work has been widely consulted with known and respected members of faith communities.

Rachel Bowerman gave the following examples of Big Question RE:

Year 1: Harvest Festival: What do many Christians remember at Harvest Festival?

Year 4: How does the life of Guru Nanak teach about respect and equality?

Year 5: How does learning about the Mosque help us to understand community?

Year 6: what does Shabat teach about responsibilities and relationships?

Rachel Bowerman tabled a scheme of work to accompany this topic. There was also a DVD about creation illustrated with pictures of the natural world and ending with the London Marathon. Unfortunately it was not possible to show this. There is a set of questions to accompany the DVD. Following questions from the Jewish representatives, Rachel agreed it would be important to consult with Doreen on the content and approach of this unit.

This was an example of RE which promoted learning *about* and learning *from* religion.

Before moving to the next part of the meeting, Jill Ross expressed her appreciation of the format of this and other recent meetings, which included presentations from children from different schools. These were a most valuable component of SACRE meetings and contributed greatly to members' understanding of the teaching of RE.

19. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 June 2011

RESOLVED: THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2011, HAVING BEEN CIRCULATED AND TAKEN AS READ, WERE SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD

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

Item 7b. Letter to Michael Gove: *this would be taken after items 10 and 11 in Matters arising.*

Item 10. Impact of the English Baccalaureate

Rachel Bowerman informed members that an email had been sent to schools encouraging them to participate in the NATRE survey on the effects of the English Baccalaureate on RE departments. She has, as yet received no feedback from the schools. However, there is now factual evidence at national level to show that the introduction of the English Baccalaureate has made a difference to RE in schools. Research by NATRE and the RE Council indicates that there has been a reduction in the number of entries for both short courses and full courses. RE departments are suffering because

timetabling was giving greater space to the humanities which are subjects included in the EBacc. More information about this can be found on the NATRE website.

Item 11. SACRE advice on authorised absence for religious observance

Rachel Bowerman thanked members for the responses she has received. The draft document includes all festival dates that fall on weekdays in term time. She urged those who had not yet confirmed the dates to do so and explained that she needed to send this out in a September Harrow Schools' Bulletin.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

Item 7b Letter to Michael Gove: this is now ready to go. It had been delayed so that the findings of the NATRE research can be included. Paper copies are available for members to take away and make suggestions. Gill Ross asked if some mention should be made of the riots. Rachel Bowerman agreed that, while not wanting to lengthen the letter any further, a brief mention would be appropriate.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

21. NASACRE Newsletter

This had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. A member asked if it could be circulated as a separate document to save printing costs. Rachel Bowerman explained that she includes all the meeting papers in one consecutively numbered sequence as this makes referencing easier in the meeting. However she agreed that the accompanying email could indicate which papers needed to be printed.

22. Reports from SACRE Partners

a) Harrow Inter Faith Council

- There has been a request from John Tucker who facilitates the Inter Faith Council, to send an observer to the SACRE meetings. There is no objection to this as it is a public meeting.
- Cllr Nizam Ismail informed the meeting that because Muslims have to bury a body as soon as possible after death, burial facilities have now been extended to be available for seven days a week. This service is now available to everyone. This development in Council provision has been brought about by the Inter Faith council.

b) Faith Communities

- As it is Jewish New Year on 29 September, Doreen Samuels passed around Bentincks mints (a non-sticky substitute for apples dipped in honey!) to wish everyone a sweet new year.
- Phiroza Gan-Kotwal informed the meeting that the Zoroastrian Centre had been open till 6.30pm on Open House weekend and had attracted over 300 visitors.

- Doreen Samuels informed the meeting that new rabbis have been appointed to the Belmont Synagogue and the Pinner Synagogue.
- Cllr Nizam Ismail informed the meeting that he had taken part in a very enjoyable visit to the synagogue at Stanmore. Such visits are good for adults as well as children.

23. Any other business:

- A request has been received from the Head of RE at Hatch End High School to be considered as a member of SACRE. Hatch End High School is now an academy. This raises the question of whether SACRE should consider establishing a place for a representative appointed by the academies in Harrow as nearly all the High Schools in Harrow have become academies. It was agreed that the Chairs' group would take this forward.

Action: Chairs' Group

- Norbury Primary School wishes to apply for a determination. Rachel Bowerman will update the application form and the Chairs' Group will approve it. Rachel Bowerman explained that although SACRE no longer actively encourages schools to apply for determinations, it is bound by law to consider requests when they arise.

Action: Rachel Bowerman and Chairs' Group

24. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

The following dates were agreed:

Autumn Term: 2011: 29 November

Spring Term 2012: 7 March

Jewish members pointed out that 7th March is the Jewish festival of Purim and they will be unable to attend. Council representatives explained that this festival was not on the council calendar and so had been overlooked. The council usually tries to avoid setting meetings on religious holidays. **It was agreed to re-schedule the SACRE meeting in collaboration with Democratic Services.**

Action: Clerk

In addition, three dates for teachers' RE CPD (Continuing Professional Development) have been arranged. The first of these is on **Wednesday 12 October 1-3pm**. The new SACRE guidelines for visits and visitors in RE will be launched at this meeting. Rachel Bowerman thanked members for the comments she has received and said that she might be calling on members to help deliver some of this training.

Chairs group: the date for the next Chairs' group meeting is Friday 7th October. Members wishing to propose an item for the next SACRE agenda should contact their Group Chair.

(Note: The Meeting closed at 9.27pm).

(Signed) MRS A STOWE
Chairman