



## Harrow SACRE Meeting

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2012 at 7.30p.m.

To be held in Council Chamber  
Harrow Civic Centre

Enquiries & apologies to:

Vivian Wright

Clerk to SACRE

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or

Rachel Bowerman

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## HARROW STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

### AGENDA

1. **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**
2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
3. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2012** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

#### Business items: Improving standards in religious education and collective worship

5. **ANNUAL REPORT**  
To agree the draft SACRE Annual Report (Pages 9 - 18)
6. **SACRE CONFERENCE: MEETING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES FROM RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS:**  
To plan for the SACRE Conference on November 29<sup>th</sup> 2012
7. **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE: REVIEWING SACRE GUIDANCE**  
Patrick O' Dwyer, Educational Professional Lead (Education Strategy & School Organisation) is jointly leading the development of measures to secure attendance and has requested this opportunity to consult with SACRE about their guidance on absence for religious observance. (Pages 19 – 20)

#### Information items: improving SACRE's effectiveness

8. **SEWA DAY: 7<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2012**  
An national initiative backed by Harrow Council and aimed at involving people in activities that enhance the environment, relieve poverty or bring joy to the community. Sewa is a concept of selfless service. Rachel Bowerman and Varsha Dodhia will update SACRE on this event nationally and locally. (Pages 21 – 34)
9. **REPORTS FROM NATIONAL RE ASSOCIATIONS**  
RE Council Newsletter October 2012 and an update on the RE Subject Review
10. **DATES OF FUTURE SACRE MEETINGS**  
Autumn term 2012: 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 - Committee Rooms 1 & 2

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**HARROW SACRE**  
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 26<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2012

**Attendance:**

**Group A: (Religious traditions and Christian Churches)**

~ Mr Zia Baig	~ Ms Beverley Wilson
A Mrs Sanaz Ajala	* Mr Neville Ransley
A Mr Mike Bishop	A Mrs Gill Ross
A Dr Julie Crow	* Mrs Doreen Samuels
~ Mrs Niru Desai	A Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli
* Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal	* Ven Sumana Sramaner
* Mr Vijay Hirani	* Zafar Khalid
* Varsha Dodhia	A Ananda Caitanya Das
~ Councillor Asad Omar	

**Group B: (Church of England)**

A Mrs Mary Abbott	* Rev'd. Matthew Stone
A Rev'd Philip Barnes	

**Group C: (Teachers' Associations)**

~ Ms Bhavita Pandya	~ Mrs Manju Radia
	* Mrs Alison Stowe (Chair)

**Group D: (Local Authority)**

Councillors:	
* Nana Asante	* Camilla Bath ( <i>delayed</i> )
	* Sasikala Suresh

**Officer**

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

**Visitors / observers**

\*Anne Drakeford, headteacher of Stanburn First School (for item 7a of the agenda)  
Cllr Brian Gate, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families

**Clerk**

\*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

*\* denotes presence*

*A denotes absence with apologies*

*~ denotes absence without apologies*

**1. Order of the Agenda:** it was agreed to take item 7a first so that Anne Drakeford did not have to stay for the rest of the meeting.

**2. Collective Worship**

**a) To receive an application to Harrow SACRE to lift or modify the requirement of the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1993 that collective worship should be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character"**

Rachel Bowerman introduced Anne Drakeford, headteacher of Stanburn First School. She explained that Anne was in attendance to present her school's re-submission. SACRE did not agree the school's

original application for a determination in March 2012 and Rachel Bowerman had written to the headteacher with constructive feedback about the nature of the SACRE's concerns. As recommended, Anne Drakeford had taken advice from Rachel Bowerman and an external RE consultant and had reviewed the school's policy and framework for collective worship. Anne Drakeford had been asked to support her application with a presentation to SACRE. This gave members of the committee the following information:

**The context of the school**

Stanburn has 300 pupils and is growing. 37 languages are spoken and 13 faiths are represented within the school community.

**Developments in the school's approach to collective worship**

A new menu of weekly themes has been identified. The newly appointed subject leader will deliver training for staff. A new framework has been introduced which has four elements:

Shared experience: a story or artefact designed to capture the children's attention and introduce a specific theme or concept, "Plug in"

Understanding and Imagination: an opportunity for children to engage with the theme, "Switch on"

Reflection: providing a focus for reflection, such as a prayer or poem, which children could affirm, contribute or listen to, "Light up"

Response: children's opportunity to make an individual commitment or response, "Light up"

**Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

Anne explained that collective worship is linked to the curriculum, to the school's approach to co-operative learning structures and is central to the school's promotion of SMSC, for which there is a newly drafted whole school policy.

**Whole School Community**

Anne outlined how she had consulted pupils, parents, governors and staff on collective worship.

Children want to share assemblies with parents and to contribute prayers and stories from their own faith traditions.

Anne Drakeford then presented an example of collective worship using the school's new framework. Despite interruptions when the room became a thoroughfare for people leaving another meeting, members of the committee were spellbound as Mrs Drakeford told the story of "The Rainbow People." She modeled the questions she had used to help children 'switch on' to a key theme of the story and the prayer to prompt their 'light up' using reflection and response.

In response to a question from Doreen Samuels, Anne Drakeford explained that the themes of assemblies are linked to other parts of the curriculum and often connect to current projects going on in school. The themes might also be reflected in the golden rules. Children's response to assemblies is very positive.

Vijay Hirani expressed the view that the story carried a universal message and its themes would be shared by many faith traditions.

Rachel Bowerman drew the committee's attention to guidance they had issued to Stanburn First after its first application was judged to be unsatisfactory:

- where the words of a prayer are used, the prayer should be explicitly located within its faith tradition;
- a structure should be used as a consistent introduction that develops pupils' confidence so that they feel comfortable about listening to prayers and other prompts for reflection, whether or not they are from a faith background;
- assembly themes should more inclusively reflect the faith and cultural traditions, ethnicities, age and backgrounds of the diverse school community.

Rachel explained that she had suggested to Anne the four elements as a structure for planning and commended Anne for embracing these and expressing them in child friendly terms.

Doreen Samuels expressed her admiration for the four elements as a planning tool. She felt it would be a wonderful resource if SACRE could collect stories appropriate to Harrow's diversity, to use in assemblies. Varsha Dodhia, representative of Jainism, said that she would be willing to share stories and other resources. Anne Drakeford welcomed others to share her planning proforma and resources.

Rachel Bowerman reminded members that collective worship, unless schools were granted a determination, was required to be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character” and that it fills this description if it “reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief.” Rachel suggested that the story of The Rainbow People, (a story from the Christian tradition) explored some key Christian beliefs – about fellowship, stewardship and equality in the sight of God - which would also be broadly echoed in other religious traditions. By exploring shared beliefs, through stories from faith traditions, schools could meet statutory requirements whilst sustaining their commitment to inclusion. The three examples of acts of collective worship submitted by Stanburn First also demonstrated that secular stories can promote exploration of a spiritual theme.

The committee thanked Anne Drakeford for her inspiring presentation and indicated their favourable response to her application. This would be followed by a formal decision later in the meeting, when a Chair had been elected.

*Anne Drakeford left the meeting*

### **3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

**Doreen Samuels, seconded by Cllr Nana Asante proposed Alison Stowe as Chair. Alison Stowe was elected unanimously.**

**Cllr Nana Asante, seconded by Vijay Hirani proposed Camilla Bath as Vice-Chair. Camilla Bath was elected unanimously.**

*The election of Vice-chair took place later in the meeting so that Camilla Bath, who had been delayed, could be consulted first. It is included here for better continuity.*

### **4. Welcome and Introductions**

**a ) Welcome:** Alison Stowe, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially new members, Varsha Dodhia, nominated by the Jain Network, Zafar Khalid, nominated by Harrow Central Mosque on behalf of Harrow Muslim Council, and Sasikala Suresh who replaces Cllr Nizam Ismail. Cllr Ismail is now Mayor of Harrow and his mayoral duties would preclude him from attending SACRE regularly. Another new member, Ananda Caitanya Das, nominated by Bhaktivedanta Manor Temple, had sent apologies but looks forward to joining the committee at the next meeting in October. Alison Stowe also welcomed Cllr Brian Gate, portfolio holder for Children, Schools and Families, whose role includes oversight of SACRE, and Claire Ali, education consultant, who would be speaking to item 8 of the agenda.

#### **b) Update on membership:**

**Academies:** Rachel Bowerman reported that in accordance with the decision of the last meeting, she had written to the headteacher representative of the academies and he had agreed that SACRE’s invitation would be considered at a future meeting.

**Teachers’ Associations:** Rachel Bowerman is awaiting an update from the secretary of Harrow Teachers’ Association clarifying which teachers’ unions are currently represented. If she receives no response, she will take this forward herself.

**Lapsed members:** in response to a question, Rachel Bowerman explained that she is in the process of advising those members who have not attended meetings this year and who have not sent apologies, that they are no longer eligible to sit on the SACRE committee. Rachel Bowerman is actively engaged in finding new members.

### **5. Apologies for Absence**

**RESOLVED:** To note apologies for absence from Sanaz Ajala, Gill Ross, Mike Bishop, Mary Abbot, Jill Crow, Paramjit Singh-Kohli, the Rev’d Philip Barnes and Ananda Caitanya Das. Camilla Bath sent her apologies for late arrival.

The meeting was quorate.

The following members were absent without apologies: Zia Baig, Niru Desai, Cllr Asad Omar, Beverley Wilson, Manju Radia.

### **5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March (pages 1-8)**

Cllr Nana Asante had sent apologies

**With this amendment the minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.**

## 6. Matters arising from the minutes:

### a) Item 4, page 3: Invitation from Louise Browning, headteacher, for a small group of SACRE members to attend a celebration assembly at Norbury School on 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> June

Vivian Wright, who is also Clerk to Norbury School, agreed to contact Louise Browning and ask for further dates for next term. She would then communicate them directly to SACRE members and would collate responses for Rachel Bowerman.

**Action: Clerk**

There were no further matters arising from the minutes

## ***Business Items: Improving standards in RE and collective worship***

## 7. Collective Worship

### a) Stanburn First School (*see also 1 above*)

Nana Asante declared an interest in this item as she is a governor at Stanburn First School **Varsha Dodhia, seconded by the Rev'd Matthew Stone proposed that SACRE grant a determination to Stanburn First School. This was agreed unanimously with one abstention.** At the committee's request, Rachel Bowerman when she writes to inform the school of this decision, will also say how much the committee had enjoyed Anne Drakeford's presentation.

Doreen Samuels expressed her appreciation of the presentations that have become such a feature of SACRE meetings under Rachel Bowerman's leadership. Rachel Bowerman responded by emphasising that SACRE had fulfilled its duties rigorously. It had been robust in its evaluation of the first application and constructive in its feedback. She judged that SACRE's recommendations had been implemented and SACRE had therefore been instrumental in improving provision for collective worship at Stanburn First.

SACRE had now seen two presentations on collective worship and, although this was a very small sample, this evidence would inform its future reports to the LA and its future workplan. SACRE had also improved its own processes by stipulating that schools should attend a SACRE meeting to present an application for a determination

Doreen Samuels suggested that the committee should start compiling a handbook exemplifying good practice in collective worship. The Chair supported this suggestion. The SACRE website, when launched, would be a most appropriate forum to publish such materials and examples of resources. Varsha Dodhia observed that collective worship is also related to health and well-being. She suggested that photos of collective worship might be posted on the website in the same way as the local papers publish photographs of new pupils at the beginning of the autumn term. These resources would help schools in the process of applying for determinations and also celebrate Harrow's diversity.

Cllr Brian Gate spoke of his remit to oversee the LA's provision for SACRE. He congratulated SACRE on its achievements. Diversity is a great strength in Harrow and SACRE does significant work in this respect. Schools have effective partnerships within their communities and this has an impact on society as children are our future adult citizens. It is important both to respect each other's values and beliefs and also to have the courage to sustain one's own beliefs. He recommended that SACRE talk to the Communications team about celebrating its work and raising its status.

### b) **Collective Worship Revisited** (*pages 33-44*)

Rachel Bowerman explained that this document from NASACRE and AREIAC (Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants) forms a very strong argument outlining the case for collective worship. It covers the requirements of the law both in terms of the spirit as well as the letter. It was written by Julie Grove, previously RE advisor for Solihull and now an executive of NASACRE. SACRE's expectations of collective worship, demonstrated in their

response to the two applications for determinations in 2011 – 2012, were aligned with the NASACRE guidance.

### **8. Meeting the needs of families from religious backgrounds: developing SACRE Guidance for schools (pages 45-48)**

Rachel Bowerman set the context for this item. The headteacher of Grange school had contacted her asking for advice when a group of Muslim parents requested that the school make provision for their children to perform their midday prayers in school. Rachel Bowerman had recommended that he formally request guidance from SACRE.

Rachel Bowerman welcomed Claire Ali, to speak to this item; she runs a consultancy advising schools within the Muslim tradition but also non-denominational schools.

Claire Ali introduced her presentation by saying that she intended to provide ideas and thinking points which might enable SACRE to formulate its own guidance for schools. She commented that the paper circulated for the meeting ('Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools' published by the Muslim Council of Britain) could be seen as quite demanding and prescriptive. However, it contained some useful information for those who knew little about Islam.

#### **Types of Prayer**

Claire Ali explained the two types of prayers: salaah (5 times a day and one of the pillars of Islam) and du'a (supplication which can take place at any time). There is a cycle of movement accompanying salaah and the prayers are performed in Arabic.

#### **Attitudes to Islam**

Surveys suggest that the majority of people are ignorant about Islam and what they do know is obtained from media reports which are likely to be negative.

#### **What does "establish a prayer room" mean to schools?**

Claire was candid in acknowledging that, when school leaders are asked to consider establishing a prayer room, they are likely to be confronted with a number of factors that appear to be problems. These include:

- Location and staffing of the room
- fear of the unknown
- fear of setting precedents
- disorder
- inequality in the provision for and treatment of different groups.

SACRE members were asked to consider what might be positive outcomes and they suggested:

- Provision that meets a child's right to practise their faith – established in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Learning about how their peers pray and what is important to them;
- Grounding children in their identity. To support children in the expression of their religious beliefs is to help them to express who they are and to feel 'connected' spiritually;
- Acknowledging that, for some children, prayer is a part of their daily life;
- Developing the skills of contemplation and inner reflection – a quiet time in the business of the school day – and building inner strength;
- The discipline of prayer might develop pupils' self-discipline and inner strength and an ordered approach to meeting their responsibilities.

Claire Ali complemented this list with the following list of positive outcomes:

- Time to recharge
- Time to connect
- A good model for time management
- Community brain gym/workout

In conclusion, Claire Ali suggested that establishing a space for prayer could have the following educational benefits for all learners, whether Muslim, of another faith background or not from a faith background:

Refreshed learners



ID valued learners  
Faith factor  
Home-school continuity  
Learners who belong (to school and society)

Returning to her starting point, Claire suggested that “a place to pray” could be offered as:

Quiet space  
Quiet ‘club’

**Rights and entitlement:** Claire Ali stressed that she had no wish for the issues around a prayer room to become confrontational. A prayer room could be seen, not as a “right”, but as a normal part of life. Mutual respect and understanding is the best way forward. It is better not to get to a stage where parents are demanding their “rights”. Claire Ali explained the Muslim concept of “deen” – Islam is not a religion but a way of life. Prayer is a part of the “deen” – something that is a normal part of life that can fit in harmoniously with work and school.

Members asked the following questions:

- How would the considerable variations in different types of Muslim practices be accommodated? Claire Ali felt that flexibility and willingness to compromise were key to this
- Would Muslims and Christians be able to pray in the same room together? As with many things this would depend on the individuals concerned, but representatives of both faiths present at the meeting felt that most Muslims and Christians would be happy to pray together.
- Would a member of staff need to be present? This was essential in regard to health and safety and if schools could see the prayer room as positive and beneficial, they would find requisite staff,
- What should the attitude of the member of staff be? For instance if s/he was reading a newspaper, would this be seen as disrespectful? Staff would only be needed for a short specific time for prayers. Muslim salaah has a set pattern and is not time consuming
- Could non-Muslim staff supervise the prayer room and how could an appropriate environment be provided? Non-Muslim staff could supervise. The prayer room should be available at specific times so staff time was not wasted.
- Could boys and girls pray together at primary school age? There is no problem with this. In fact if space is limited, men and women pray together in the same room, the women separating themselves by standing behind the men. Schools could gently remind parents of this accommodation if they disputed the sexes being together.
- In both Muslim and Judaic traditions, when children reach puberty, they have an obligation to pray. Might not having a prayer room create pressure for families who felt that their children were not yet ready to take on this obligation? No pressure should be put on children or families. As with all faiths, there are practising and non-practising members in Islam and the non-practising members should not feel under pressure.
- Would the very specific times of Muslim prayers create problems with the school timetable? These could be accommodated: Zafar Khalid explained that Muslims in the workplace create time to fulfil their obligations by praying within prescribed lunch hours.
- Practical considerations of time and space would need to be carefully considered. Spare space in schools is being used up by the school expansion programme. Prayer rooms can be used for other things at other times. Claire Ali recommended trying out a prayer room for a limited time, if it does not work, it can be withdrawn.
- Cllr Nana Asante reflected that it is important to make time and space for religion. We need to be mindful of complexity and work together to give parents and children opportunities to pray. This is something that could benefit all faith groups as well as fitting in with the ethos of Harrow schools.

Members agreed that the message Claire Ali had given did not apply exclusively to meeting the needs of Muslims but was concerned with promoting schools as a place of harmony and respect for all.

Rachel Bowerman responded to some of the points made during Claire’s presentation She agreed that Muslims are victims of negative coverage in the media and suggested that so are the media images of other religious believers and religions.

Rachel Bowerman reminded members of the request from Grange school which had prompted this item on the agenda and suggested that she should draft some guidelines based on the “positives” expressed



by SACRE members. She made the further suggestion that Claire Ali should be commissioned to work on this with her. **This was agreed.**

**Action: Rachel Bowerman and Claire Ali**

### **Information Items:**

#### **9. Reports from National RE Associations**

**a) NASACRE AGM** Rachel Bowerman gave an oral report of this meeting. In particular she drew the committee's attention to the main points of a presentation by Sarah Smalley, representing the RE Council and Alan Brine, HMI on the national headlines for RE:

- Half of secondary schools are becoming academies. Academies are not required to deliver the local agreed syllabus and academies can choose or develop their own syllabus without external quality assurance. SACREs have no remit for monitoring provision for RE in academies. Harrow SACRE's offer of representation for local academies is therefore well timed;
  - A DfE workforce survey has found that in 2010 - 2011 the introduction of the English Baccalaureate appears to have caused no reduction in the number of staff teaching RE. It is expected that the impact of the EBacc may be felt in 2012 – 2013;
  - NATRE has carried out a follow-up survey and found that the EBacc has impacted negatively upon provision for RE in  $\frac{1}{3}$  schools. In many it is the full course GCSE which is no longer offered as an option; the number of schools not entering any pupils for GCSE has doubled.
  - Short course GCSEs no longer count towards school performance measures and can no longer be topped up with a second short course to make a full GCSE. It has been through the short courses that most secondary schools have met pupils' entitlement to RE at KS 4 and numbers of pupils entered had increased year on year, nationally and locally;
  - Places for RE in Higher education have been reduced and this has affected 19 of 34 university / college RE departments. Whilst 50 places were reinstated, as the result of protests, this measure may have come too late for some 'downsized' departments;
  - Membership data from the Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants illustrates the impact of changes at Local Authority level. Only 36 of AREIAC members are Local Authority advisers with RE as their main responsibility. Many LAs only fund a consultant for the termly SACRE meetings which limits the extent to which SACREs can be proactive in their work with schools and in their monitoring and evaluation of provision and standards for RE. Harrow Council continues to regard SACRE as a priority, ensuring that HSIP provides RE expertise to SACRE;
  - The review of the national curriculum will not include a framework for RE because the government is mindful that in law it is determined locally. The RE Council will develop some non-statutory guidance and have advised Agreed Syllabus Conferences to wait until this is produced before concluding a local syllabus review;
- The Chair had mentioned earlier that this will be a busy year for SACRE. This is because the agreed syllabus, last revised in 2008, is due for revision in 2013 by an Agreed Syllabus Conference. At the moment, the recommendation is to wait and see what is happening to the National Curriculum before revising the agreed syllabus.

In addition to these concerns, there were some headlines about positive developments:

- A RE quality mark is being trialled. If successful it will be introduced nationally. Given the success of the Artsmark and PE mark, this is likely to raise the profile of RE;
- An All Party Parliamentary Group for RE has been established and the first priority of its workplan is to initiate an enquiry into excellence in the teaching of RE. 115 MPs signed an early day motion to attempt to include RE in the EBacc and, building upon this high level of interest, SACRE members nationally have been urged to write to their MPs urging them to join this APPG;
- The January 2012 Ofsted Framework has enhanced the profile of SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural), to which RE and collective worship should make strong contributions;
- When academies are inspected, there is a recommendation that inspectors should investigate if there is no provision for RE, but the recommendation goes no further than this. Alan Brine, HMI, plans to scrutinise the tranche of spring term 2012 inspection reports to see what mention

is made of RE. At the end of 2012 the next HMI evaluation of RE, based upon a 3 year cycle of thematic and subject visits, will be published.

Rachel Bowerman will email copies of her report to members and the clerk.

**Action: Rachel Bowerman**

Varsha Dodhia commented that, in preparation for joining SACRE, she has been reading SACRE reports on the Internet and Harrow SACRE has the strongest report.

Rachel Bowerman felt that SACRE was lucky to have such commitment from members of all faith groups and strong support for SACRE from the LA. Cllr Brian Gate observed that it is strange that the government does not see the relevance of RE as an important part of people's lives. Appreciation of different faiths underpins diversity and helps mutual understanding and community cohesion.

#### **10. Any other business**

- a) **SACRE conference:** Rachel Bowerman suggested that SACRE should hold a conference with the theme of meeting the needs of children and families from religious backgrounds in schools. **This was agreed.** Rachel Bowerman will circulate some dates for members of the committee to consider.

**Action: Rachel Bowerman**

- b) **Day of Service:** this suggestion will be discussed at a future meeting
- b) The Chair and Rachel Bowerman apologised for the change of venue and the consequent delays in setting up equipment. They will be writing to Democratic Services about this.

**Action: Chair and Rachel Bowerman**

#### **11. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:**

The following dates were agreed:

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 7.30pm in the Council Chamber

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 7.30pm Committee Rooms 1 and 2.

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013 7.30pm Committee rooms 1 and 2

**The Meeting closed at 10.10 pm**

**Signed:**

**(Chair)**

**(Date)**

**SACRE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT  
2011 – 2012**

## SACRE Monitoring and Evaluation of

- **Attainment and progress in RE**
- **Quality of teaching and the extent to which the curriculum delivers the Harrow Agreed Syllabus and meets the needs of pupils**
- **Leadership and management of RE**

- Public examination entries in RS
- Public examination results in RS

This data is not yet available and, because all but one of the non-denominational High Schools are now academies, it is not clear to what extent this data will be available.

Two schools gave presentations to SACRE in 2011 – 2012.

### **Belmont School and the Rights Respecting Schools Award**

Three Y6 pupils, who are the school's RRS ambassadors, accompanied their headteacher, Mrs Heather Harris, to explain to SACRE what the achievement of this award has contributed to Belmont School.

SACRE members heard about some of the 54 articles of the UNICEF Charter and the balance of rights with responsibilities. They were reminded that the right to healthy food and clean water carries a responsibility not to waste these essentials of human life. The right to education must be accompanied by a responsibility not to distract others from their learning and the right to practice their religion relies on others respecting that right. In a PowerPoint presentation by one of the pupil-ambassadors, members were challenged to think about times when individuals might need to stand up for and protect the rights of others.

SACRE members agreed that if RE was to empower children and young people to celebrate and defend these rights and responsibilities, the emphasis in RE should not be upon the 'naming of parts' but upon those big ideas which are central to the human search for meaning and purpose.

SACRE then discussed what RE might look like in a Rights Respecting School and there were examples of units of work which promote 'big question RE' such as 'How does the life of Guru Nanak teach about respect and equality?' and 'How does learning about the mosque help us to understand community?' It was emphasized that these units of work help pupils to *learn about* key beliefs and practices within a faith tradition and also to *learn from* religions about concepts which are shared by many faiths and valued in society. .

## **Priestmead Primary School and Nursery**

The RE subject leader and eight Y6 pupils gave a presentation to SACRE on how visits and visitors are central to the programme of RE at Priestmead.

Pupils described what they had learned on their visits to St Anselm's Catholic Church, Stanmore Synagogue, Bhaktivedanta Manor and Watford Mosque. Pupils were emphatic that these visits consolidated their prior learning and were rich, memorable experiences.

Pupils engaged in an impressive question and answer session with SACRE members. When pupils were asked whether there were any factors common to all the places of worship, Rachel Bowerman encouraged a Muslim SACRE representative to talk about how at the mosque Muslims pray, as the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had taught, shoulder to shoulder, no one member of the ummah more important than another. A Hindu member of SACRE explained that at the mandir Hindus often eat a communal meal together sitting on the floor. Priestmead pupils remembered that at the church Christians take wine from a communal cup. So SACRE members reached the conclusion that these are expressions of a shared religious belief that humans are born equal in the sight of God. It was agreed that exploring concepts such as these should be what agreed syllabus RE is aiming for in order to contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.

## **Collective Worship:**

- **SACRE guidance on determinations**
- **Determinations submitted and agreed in 2011 – 2012**
- **SACRE monitoring of provision and quality of Collective Worship**
- **Freedom of information requests relating to Collective Worship and Determinations**

In the autumn term 2011, SACRE members initiated a review of their guidance for schools on applications for determinations. Harrow SACRE does not operate a policy of promoting determinations, but has a duty to formally consider and make decisions about those applications for determinations which are submitted by schools.

When SACRE commissioned the LA Lead Officer to prepare new guidance, members were mindful that schools should provide information about the religious profile of the school and the groups of pupils for whom a proposed determination would apply. Additionally, the new proforma requires information about:

- how a school's Governing Body is involved in the decision to apply for a determination;
- evidence of consultation with staff, parents and pupils and a summary of responses / feedback;
- information about withdrawals from collective worship.

In addition, schools are asked to provide SACRE with their collective worship policy, a term's overview of planning and three examples of worked planning for acts of collective worship. SACRE have also advised schools that they will be required to attend the SACRE meeting at which their application is to be received and to give a presentation exemplifying the school's approach to collective worship. This clearly articulated expectation of documentation and presentation is intended to ensure that SACRE can, to some extent, fulfil its responsibility for monitoring provision for and quality of collective worship in Harrow schools. (The new Proforma is included as Appendix A)

Two schools submitted successful applications for a whole school determination in 2011 – 2012: Norbury School and Stanburn Infant School. SACRE was robust in its analysis of the evidence and information submitted by the schools, provided feedback to each school about their documentation and left each school with a challenge for the further development of their processes. In the spring term an application was not agreed by SACRE and constructive feedback was provided about the nature of SACRE's concerns. It was at this point that SACRE determined that a school presentation was essential in providing sufficient evidence on which to base a decision. SACRE has been instrumental in improving provision for collective worship at this school.

SACRE has used the school presentations to identify elements of provision and policy which were of a high quality and should be shared with other schools. For this reason, this annual report, which will be circulated to all Harrow schools, includes cameo portraits of collective worship at these two schools.

## Collective Worship at Norbury School

### Context:

Norbury has a diverse ethnic, cultural and religious profile: 22% of the school community are Christian, 21% Hindu, 40% Muslim and 12% humanist or atheist. Celebration of the diversity and unity of the school community is central to the school's approach to collective worship; the headteacher regards 'assembly' as a time for re-affirming the values of the Norbury commonwealth.

Norbury regularly applies for a review and renewal of its determination from SACRE every five years and asserts that it is because of the multi-faith nature of the school's planning for collective worship, that no children are withdrawn.

### Planning:

Religious festivals are mapped onto the year's collective worship planner and then weekly themes are identified. Collective Worship is designed to be an experience which is different from the curriculum experienced in lessons. Accordingly, artefacts are used to create a 'special' atmosphere and this is sometimes reinforced by the choice of venue; collective worship is sometimes located outside in the gardens or pergola and pupils report that this aids their reflection and sense of the spiritual.

### Partnership:

Consultation on the school's application for a renewal of its determination involved parents and pupils and generated considerable interest in and validation of the school's approach. Parents have recommended that a school prayer is composed, which expresses the values and beliefs of being a 'Norbarian.' They suggested faith-materials and requested that the weekly themes should be published in the school newsletter. Pupils responded with excitement and enthusiasm and are keen to lead acts of collective worship themselves, not just collectively as a class but individually and in small groups. An assembly committee has recently been convened, with representatives of staff, pupils and parents working together to further enhance delivery of collective worship.

The headteacher has led staff and pupils in the development of a 'strap line' which is used consistently to introduce a prayer or other focus for reflection. Feedback from pupils suggests that pupils, from faith and secular backgrounds, find this consistency reassuring and confidence-inspiring.

### Exemplification:

The Norbury approach to collective worship was exemplified for SACRE in two presentations. On a theme of education, pupils had considered the aspirations and values which are common to pupils around the world and reflected on "what unites us: **know** more, able to **do** more, **BE MORE.**"

In an act of worship to mark Martin Luther King Day, the headteacher outlined events in the life of the black civil rights leader and considered how he made a difference. She shared the lyrics of Stevie Wonder's song and then pupils were invited to reflect on "strength and courage whilst we try and be brave and strong when faced with those who we know are wrong."

SACRE members found Ms Browning's presentation an inspirational illustration of how collective worship at its best can be deeply relevant to pupils' faith, ethnic and cultural



backgrounds and an affirmation of the school's ethos and principles. Members recommended that the Norbury approach should be shared with other schools locally and asked the Lead Officer to contact NASACRE to suggest that Ms Browning was recruited to the NASACRE working group drawing up guidance on collective worship.

## **Collective worship at Stanburn Infants**

### **Context:**

Stanburn Infants is an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse school; 15% of the school community is Christian, 46% Hindu, 24% Muslim and 6% Jain.

### **Planning:**

Before the summer term application to SACRE, senior leaders developed and introduced a new framework for acts of collective worship. This framework has four elements:

- shared experience – 'plug in' which might be in the form of a story, picture, lyrics and music, artefact or visitor or other resource to introduce and embody the theme of the act of worship
- understanding and imagination – 'switch on' which engages the children with the shared experience at a deeper level and develops their understanding of the theme / issues
- reflection – 'light up' when children are provided with a focus for their reflection, such as a prayer, reading or quotation from a religious tradition or another source with a spiritual dimension.
- response – 'light up' which provides a structured opportunity for pupils to make a personal, individual response or commitment or to join collectively in affirming shared values.

The Stanburn Infant School policy on collective worship explains that "without the 'light up' elements it is NOT collective worship." The policy also provides guidance on the wording with which these 'light up' opportunities are signalled to pupils within this multi-faith school. For example,

*"Listen to the words of this prayer that Hindus say. You can make it your own prayer or you can think carefully about today's theme and what it means to you." Followed by "I will give you a quiet moment to think about what you will do to ...(eg care about our precious world...be a good friend .....)"*

Those who lead acts of worship at Stanburn Infants sometimes use a candle at the start of the light up and extinguish it to show that time of reflection is over.

SACRE recommend this planning framework to other schools because it ensures that collective worship is entirely distinctive and different from provision for the curriculum and provides children with a structure for their participation through the 'light up' opportunities for individual reflection and response. When prayers and quotations are used – sometimes read by children - they are explicitly located within their faith tradition.

## **Exemplification**

In the model that the headteacher, Anne Drakeford, presented to SACRE, the story of 'The Rainbow People' was used to introduce the theme of people learning to live together and help each other, whatever their differences. SACRE members were spellbound throughout the story. Mrs Drakeford modelled the questions used to help infant children 'switch on' to the key theme of the story and read a prayer from the Christian tradition which was used for the children's reflection and response.

SACRE members recognised that 'The Rainbow People' is a story which can lead to an exploration of some key Christian beliefs about fellowship, stewardship and equality in the sight of God, which would also be echoed in other religious traditions. By exploring shared beliefs, through stories from faith traditions, schools can meet statutory requirements for collective worship whilst sustaining their commitment to inclusion. Another example of an act of collective worship submitted by Stanburn Infants demonstrated that well-chosen 'secular' stories can also promote exploration of a spiritual theme.

As a result of the impetus and inspiration provided by these two schools to the SACRE's debate about collective worship, new guidance for schools will be developed during 2012 – 13. This will support schools in their provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which has an enhanced status in the September 2012 Ofsted Framework.

## **Freedom of Information requests**

Harrow Council regularly receives Freedom of Information requests related to assemblies, collective worship and determinations. Most recently, in July 2012, Chris Hastings from the Mail on Sunday, asked for detail about:

- numbers and names of schools which had applied for a determination and numbers of those which had been agreed, in the last four years
- the schools' rationale for their application
- information about the form of worship to be provided once a determination had been granted
- numbers of schools "not providing an assembly which is broadly Christian in nature"
- copies of all written correspondence, including emails, specific to an application for a determination

Responses to these FOI requests are managed by the LA Lead Officer. Whilst SACRE is gradually building mechanisms for reviewing schools' provision for collective worship, members are aware that these rely largely on the good will of headteachers and the good relationships with schools established previously by SACRE and by Rachel Bowerman, Senior School Improvement Adviser. SACRE does not have the right to demand information directly from schools and has not yet chosen to require the Local Authority to do so. The SACRE does not therefore have the sort of evidence base which would enable it to provide information about whether or not the provision of collective worship in Harrow community schools meets the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1998. Schools which have become academies would no longer submit requests for determinations to SACRE nor would SACRE have a remit to monitor their provision. There is no legal requirement for schools to provide an assembly and SACRE has no duty to monitor or report on assemblies.

## **Managing the SACRE and partnership with the Local Authority and other key stakeholders**

- **Membership**
- **Partnership with Harrow Council**
- **Advice given by SACRE**
- **Partnership with NASACRE and the RE Council**

### **Meetings**

In the academic year 2011 – 2012, SACRE met four times: 19<sup>th</sup> September, and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and 13<sup>th</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

### **Membership**

In 2011 – 2012 SACRE has welcomed four new members. Processes for monitoring attendance have become more robust and the representation on Group A has been reviewed to ensure that SACRE takes into account the diversity within its religious communities:

- Christianity – SACRE has decided to recruit an Orthodox Christian to Group A. The Greek Orthodox community recently celebrated the opening of their new-build church, St Panteleimon; the Romanian Orthodox community has a growing presence in Harrow churches and schools
- Hinduism - a representative has been recruited from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and the Lead Officer is seeking to recruit a representative from one of the South Indian Hindu temples in Harrow
- Islam - Harrow Muslim Council has become the nominating body for two of the places on SACRE and as a result, they have nominated a representative from the Harrow Central Mosque
- Jainism - our long-serving Jain representative, Vinod Kapashi, has been replaced by Varsha Dodhia who was nominated by the Jain Network.

SACRE reiterated its commitment to sustaining relationships with the majority of High Schools which became academies in September 2011. SACRE has invited the academies to nominate two associate, non-voting representatives to Group C. No nominations have yet been received.

Cllr Brian Gate Portfolio holder for Children, Schools and Families, has attended SACRE meetings twice in 2011 – 2012 and recognises that SACRE's role is to hold the Local Authority to account for standards and provision for RE and Collective Worship in its schools and to advise it on resources to support the delivery of the local agreed syllabus. He congratulated SACRE on its newly published guidance on Visits and Visitors for RE and Collective Worship and its launch in a training event for RE subject leaders at St Panteleimon Greek Orthodox Church.

### **Financial support for SACRE**

Statement to be inserted

### **Guidance on establishing a space for prayer in schools**

Two primary schools have referred to SACRE or to the LA Lead Officer, Rachel Bowerman, for guidance in relation to parental requests for a prayer room for Muslim pupils. As a result, Claire Ali, who runs a local consultancy advising schools on Islam, was invited to give a presentation at the June 2012 SACRE meeting. Claire's approach was to articulate the

benefits for all pupils of establishing a space for prayer and reflection. The following reasons for establishing a space for prayer particularly resonated with SACRE members:

- to support children in the expression of their religious beliefs at school is to ground them in their sense of identity and to help them to feel connected spiritually;
- for some children and young people prayer is a normal part of their daily routine and it requires of them a self-discipline and skills for meeting their responsibilities which a school would want to consolidate and encourage;
- the movements of prayer for many people of faith are as energising as the brain gym which many schools intersperse between lessons; the spiritual discipline of prayer provides a time to connect and recharge;
- Harrow schools are keen to involve pupils in celebrating and defending the rights and responsibilities of the United Nations Children's Charter through accreditation as a Rights Respecting School. Consulting and involving young people in managing a space for prayer would further empower them to discuss rights and responsibilities.

SACRE has commissioned the development of a guidance document for schools which will be launched at a SACRE Conference in November 2012.

### **Partnership with NASACRE and the RE Council**

SACRE welcomes the professional updates and guidance on national developments in RE available through attendance at NASACRE events and from RE Council newsletters.

During 2011 – 2012 SACRE has discussed the following issues at its meetings:

- evidence from the NATRE survey of the damaging impact of the EBacc on provision for RS GCSE full and short courses
- approximately half of secondary schools nationally have become academies, which can choose or develop their own RE syllabus with no external quality assurance
- HMI subject survey visits and the use of the RE-specific grade descriptors as a tool for school improvement

**Launch of SACRE Guidance:  
Visits and Visitors for RE and Collective Worship  
at St Panteleimon Greek Orthodox Church**



The Greek Orthodox community have worshipped in Harrow since 1975, first of all sharing church premises with St Peter's and more recently in their own building. In 2012 congregations in the new St Panteleimon include many Christians from the Orthodox diaspora including Romanians.

Father Anastasios Salapata and members of the community welcomed RE subject leaders and SACRE members with a sumptuous tea upon arrival. Then the visitors were taken on a guided tour of the building during which they learned:

- how, for believers, icons help to explain the Christian mystery of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus – the mystery which is celebrated in the Service of the Divine Liturgy. It has been said that an icon is a prayer itself, a hymn in colour and that an icon painter is 'the carpenter of the door which brings people into Christ.'
- how the Orthodox pray, at home and in the church, by lighting a candle, which they believe goes on burning as God goes on listening to their prayers and loving them; and
- about this community of St Panteleimon and the activities through which they worship and learn together and affirm their beliefs and culture.

Participants were given a CDROM with a PowerPoint 'guided tour' of the church and a hard copy of the new SACRE Guidance.

## **Harrow Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)**

### **Authorised Absence for Religious Festivals: guidance for headteachers and Governing Bodies** published for the academic year 2011-2012

In the UK, the pattern of the school year takes account of most of the western Christian festivals and holy days. Important days of religious observance in the calendars of other religious traditions and denominations, however, often fall in term time and on school days.

Those parents, who are nurturing their children within a faith tradition, understandably want their children to be able to engage in those key events which involve corporate worship and celebration and which affirm their religious beliefs. Schools will want to be sensitive to parental requests for the authorization of absence for religious observance because they recognize that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to a child's sense of identity and contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It has been agreed by the Local Authority that up to three days in the school year may be authorized for absence for religious observance. This applies to both pupils and staff. Headteachers have traditionally welcomed guidance from Harrow SACRE regarding those days which might be authorized within each faith tradition.

In order to support headteachers and Governing Bodies, representatives of Harrow's faith groups on SACRE have agreed a list of key dates for religious observance that fall during weekdays in the school year 2011 – 2012.

It should be noted that this document has advice status. The final decision for permitting authorized absence for religious observance must rest with the Governing Body and the school, balancing religious requirements with the importance of regular attendance at school. In 2011 – 2012, for example, four Jewish festivals / high holy days, on which Jewish law prohibits work, fall during term time. Observant Jews therefore may therefore require additional absence from school.

Some pupils, though growing up within a faith community, may prefer to attend school on festival days.

#### **The needs of different religious groups**

Within some religious traditions, observance varies between different denominations and communities. Ashura, for example, is a relatively minor festival for Sunni Muslims but a holy day of major significance for the Shia community. Within Hinduism, Diwali is almost universally celebrated, whilst the Tamil Hindu community will also celebrate festivals particular to South India and Sri Lanka.

Whilst headteachers and teachers must ensure that requests are genuine and reasonable, they are recommended not to doubt a request on grounds that other families of the same faith have not requested absence on the same day or at the same time. It may be the case that:

- the level of observance differs amongst families within the same faith tradition;
- a particular denominational or cultural grouping observes different holy days to other groups within the same faith;
- a religious group requires observance of religious practices that are different for different members of the community (for example commemorating the anniversary of the death of a family member or a day special to a saint or deity of particular significance to the family).



**What can schools do to meet the needs of families from religious traditions whilst promoting high attendance rates?**

Harrow schools are aware of the religious communities represented within their school and take reasonable steps to ensure, whenever possible, that events in the school diary – such as parents evenings, school performances, CPD days - do not clash with days of significant religious importance to pupils and staff.

As part of their written communications with families, some schools send a termly or annual proforma asking for advance information of parents' requests for absence for religious observance. However, some communities may not be able to identify festival dates that far in advance.

Parents should be encouraged to consider whether the religious observance could be accommodated out of school hours. They should be asked to give the school as much notice of a proposed absence as is reasonably possible and be willing to discuss with the school how work missed will be caught up.

For religiously observant children and young people there are expectations of religious prayer and observance throughout the year. Schools can often make provision for pupils and staff to fulfil these observances without the need for absence during the school day. For example, through consultation with the Muslim communities represented within the school, a prayer room and nearby facilities for washing can enable young Muslims to perform salah on the school site.

In making a judgement about learners' attendance, guidance for Ofsted inspectors requires them to consider all the evidence available, including the attendance of different groups of pupils and patterns of absence. The Local Authority encourages schools to include, in their analysis of patterns of absence, data relating to absence for religious observance. This is often particularly relevant in the autumn term.