

HARROW SACRE MEETING

WEDNESDAY 25TH JUNE 2014 AT 7.30P.M.

To be held in Committee Rooms 1 & 2, Harrow Civic Centre

Enquiries & apologies to:
Vivian Wright, Clerk to SACRE

vmwright@waitrose.com

or

Rachel Bowerman, LA Lead Officer to SACRE

020 8736 6516

HARROW STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

AGENDA

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**
(Please notify Rachel Bowerman of any nominations)
2. **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**
Welcome to the LA representatives on Group D who were appointed w/b 9.6.14:
Cllr Ghazanfar Ali (Labour), Cllr Sasi Suresh (Labour), Cllr Mrs Camilla Bath (Conservative)
and their reserves: Cllr Kareema Marikar (Labour), Cllr Margaret Davine (Labour), Cllr Manjibhai Kara (Conservative)
3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH MARCH 2014** (Pages 1 - 7)
5. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Business items: Improving standards in religious education and collective worship

6. **SACRE MONITORING THE QUALITY OF RE: A PRESENTATION BY BELMONT SCHOOL.**
The Y5 cohort have visited the Jewish Way of Life exhibition. SACRE will hear about how the curriculum systematically covers Judaism through the school, about preparations for the visit, children's experiences of the Jewish Way of Life exhibition and the planned follow-up.
(This presentation is still to be confirmed).

Information items: improving SACRE's effectiveness

7. **NASACRE AGM 22.05.14: 'RISING TO THE CHALLENGE'**
Rachel Bowerman attended the Annual Meeting of the National Association of SACREs. She will report on the ideas and issues considered and the implications for RE and for Harrow SACRE (Attached papers 20+ Ideas for SACRE's)
8. **REPORTS FROM NATIONAL RE ASSOCIATIONS**
 - a) RE Council Newsletter June 2014 and retiring Chair's report
 - b) RE Council Chair's Report May 2014
9. **REPORTS FROM SACRE PARTNERS**
 - a) Harrow Interfaith Council
 - b) Faith Communities:
 - Report on the Launch of the Jewish Way of Life exhibition
10. **DATES OF FUTURE SACRE MEETINGS**
Thursday 11th September 2014 (Agreed Syllabus conference), Wednesday 1st October 2014 & Thursday 4th December 2014

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 6th MARCH 2014

Attendance:

Group A: (Religious traditions and Christian Churches)

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

Group B: (Church of England)

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

Group C: (Teachers' Associations)

* Mrs Manju Radia
* Mrs Alison Stowe (Chair)

Group D: (Local Authority)

Councillors:
~ *Nana Asante*
~ *James Bond*
* Manji Kara
* Camilla Bath
* Sasikala Suresh

Officer

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

Clerk

*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

Visitors

Sara Younger, Education Policy and Projects Manager for the Board of Deputies of British Jews
Andrea Kahn, Head of RE at Avanti House School

* *denotes presence*
A denotes absence with apologies
~ *denotes absence without apologies*

1. Welcome and introductions: the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially visitors Sara Younger, who was here to give a presentation on the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition at Pinner Synagogue and Andrea Kahn, Head of RE at Avanti House School who was attending as an interested observer. New councillor member, Manji Kara, introduced himself.

2. Apologies for absence:

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Ven Sumana Sramaner and Ananda Caitanya Das. The following members were also absent:

Group A: Mr Zia Baig, Councillor Asad Omar, Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Mr Zafar Khalid and Ms Beverley Wilson

Group D: Cllr Nana Asante and Cllr James Bond

3. Order of the Agenda

AGREED: to take item 5 as the next item, as Sara Younger had to leave for another engagement.

Business Items: Improving standards in RE and collective worship

4. Resourcing RE and Improving Teachers' Subject Knowledge

The Jewish Way of Life Exhibition

Sara Younger introduced herself. She is the Education Policy and Projects Manager for the Board of Deputies of British Jews. She handles matters of education policy including the new National Curriculum, and the Examination Boards. She also works closely with the Religious Education Council. The Council has established a "Young Ambassadors" scheme, where young people can report on their positive experiences of RE to ministers at Westminster.

She is here this evening to tell members about the exhibition to be held at the Pinner Synagogue from 9th-26th June 2014. The exhibition has been renamed "The Jewish Living Experience" in order to reflect the tactile and interactive nature of the exhibition. It is a traveling exhibition designed to explain Judaism for KS2 and above. It contains a wealth of very rich resources designed to reflect the core values of Judaism with sections on the Synagogue, Torah, Shabbat, the Dietary Laws, Life Cycles, moral and ethical values (such as charity and community cohesion) and Jewish festivals (Sukkot, Shavuot and Pesach). Everyone, whether belonging to another religion or none could find something to relate to in this exhibition. The exhibition also includes attractive posters for each of these themes: schools can obtain these to add to their own resources.

Children coming to the exhibition can handle real objects, ask questions and taste food.

Sara Younger tabled some leaflets and will send an electronic version which can be attached to the minutes.

Action: Sara Younger and Clerk

Sara Younger asked members to share news of this exhibition with their schools and faith groups. They will be invited to the launch on 9th June when there will also be a training session for teachers between 5 and 6pm. Sara Younger will leave her email address so that members can contact her with any suggestions and questions.

She added that the Board also runs ""Jewish Living Tours" of Jewish London for secondary school pupils. This includes a visit to a school and synagogue. Members of the committee are welcome to join these tours. These tours can act as an encouragement to other faith groups to undertake similar activities and by enhancing understanding of another religion improves tolerance and good will.

Rachel Bowerman added that although there will be school visits to the exhibition during school hours, there will also be opportunities for groups from the members' own communities to visit the exhibition. Stan Conway at the Pinner Synagogue is the person to contact regarding visits, Sara Younger is the contact for training sessions.

A suggestion was made that as the next SACRE meeting falls within the time of the exhibition, the committee might consider holding its next meeting at the Pinner Synagogue so that they could enjoy the exhibition. This suggestion was discussed in more depth later in the meeting. *See 12 below.*

Rachel Bowerman thanked Sara Younger for her presentation. Sara Younger then left the meeting.

At this point, Rachel Bowerman and Doreen Samuels passed round pastries to celebrate the festival of Purim. Doreen Samuels explained the symbolism of her pastries which are called Hamantaschen (Haman's pockets) or Oznei Haman (Haman's ears) in memory of the great villain Haman who persecuted the Jews in Ancient Persia. Esther and Mordecai planned to overturn Haman's plan and, having saved the king Ahasuerus from a plot on his life, were given permission to fight back against Haman's persecution. After some gory battles, the Jews saved themselves and the festival of Purim celebrates this victory. It is a carnival festival which involves feasting and dressing up. It aims to eradicate the memory of Haman – someone who commits genocide out of greed and hatred. This is done by getting so drunk that Mordecai

and Haman become indistinguishable. There are four imperatives for the festival: to read the story, hold a family meal, make gifts of food to friends and provide poor Jewish families with the provisions for a family meal.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd December 2013 (pages 1-7)

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

6. Matters arising from the minutes

7. Harrow SACRE Annual report 2012-13

a) To receive the analysis of the published RS examination data and entry patterns

Rachel Bowerman tabled the examination data for the annual report. This comprises the 2013 GCSE, AS and A level data for Harrow and nationally. Following the statistical table, Rachel Bowerman has provided a short background summary. This explains that the English Baccalaureate was introduced in 2009/10. It includes Science, Languages and Humanities but does not include RE. There was a big outcry about this omission. In October 2013, the DfE published a release showing that as a result of the Baccalaureate, there had been an increase in entries for humanities subjects, especially in community schools. RE did not gain from this. The summary also includes a short extract from "True picture of 2013 RE exam results not being told" from *RE Today Services*. This report reveals that for the first time since the introduction of the RE short course in 1995, there has been a decrease in the number of entries for the short course. Although there has been an increase in entries for the full GCSE in RE this does not offset the fall in numbers for the short course, so there has been an overall decrease in the number of entries nationally.

Locally the number of entries for the GCSE short and full courses show similar trends. The rise in the number of students taking the full course and drop in the number taking the short course is attributed to the fact that the short course is no longer available to the whole cohort so that students are not being offered their entitlement in RE. The Harrow results apply to non-denominational schools only. This includes academies. The national data includes the faith schools where all pupils are entered for the full course.

A member queried the figure of only 5 students taking AS level in Harrow in 2013. Rachel Bowerman will check this.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

This downward trend is not unexpected, but has happened more rapidly than anticipated. The RE Council and NATRE are concerned that fewer students are taking GCSE RE and a consequence of this will be fewer teachers of RE which will limit the offering of RE at GCSE still further.

In response to a question as to the results of the lobbying of the government to accord RE its rightful place in the curriculum, Rachel Bowerman informed members that this does not appear to have had any effect on government policy.

There were no further matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

7. SACRE's Monitoring the Quality of RE: receiving a school self evaluation report

Glebe Primary School

Context

Rachel Bowerman introduced this item. In response to a suggestion made at an earlier meeting that it would be helpful to have some contextual data when receiving these reports, she opened her presentation with some background information on Glebe.

Glebe is a large primary school of 519 pupils. About 25% of pupils are on FSM (Free School Meals). The school includes children from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the largest minority being AOW (Any Other White), which in Harrow mostly comprises children from Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. After this the Indian children are the second largest group (28%), Any Other Asian (25%), African (10%). For most children at the school, English is not their first language. Mobility is high at 26% and the school deprivation factor is also higher than average at 0.28.

The educational profile of the school shows that results at KS1 are lower than the national average and the school attributes this to the high proportion of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. By the end of KS2 however, the picture has changed and the proportion of

children obtaining level 5 is higher than the national average. Overall, both achievement and progress results are above the national average at KS2 and these results are also reflected in the analysis of the progress and achievement of groups within the school. In 2009, Ofsted judged the school to be outstanding.

Donna Barrett, the Head Teacher, recognises the importance of religion to the majority of children at her school. When Rachel Bowerman reported to the primary heads, she was one of the first to support the submission of RE reports to SACRE. She regretted that neither she, nor other members of her senior staff were able to attend this evening to present their report, but that she would welcome feedback from SACRE.

The Report

The report judges RE to be outstanding. In response to a question, Rachel Bowerman confirmed that the school has a RE subject leader and that also the senior teacher for Teaching and Learning is very committed to RE and represents this subject on the Senior Leadership team.

Members noted that the commentary and evaluations in the text of the report very closely replicate the Ofsted subject specific criteria which are used by HMI subject inspectors for their thematic inspections. Other sections are generic and are perhaps extracts from the whole school SEF. Members recommend that schools personalise their commentary so that it gives a true picture of RE at the school.

Feedback

Members observed that had a school leader been able to attend our meeting, they would have liked to learn more about the evidence base for the judgements reached. It is reported, for example, that book scrutinies and subject reviews are conducted and that at team meetings and whole staff meetings the findings are shared.

A specific example or verbatim quote would add authenticity and relate the findings of the report to the school. A member who is also a Chair of governors suggested that, if he were a governor at Glebe, he would like to observe a RE lesson in progress.

Since RE is evaluated as outstanding at Glebe, Members would like to see the school apply for the RE Quality Kitemark, gold standard.

At Glebe it is reported that pupils reach high standards in RE and SACRE members would like to learn how senior leaders manage to secure sufficient time for RE when their priority is clearly raising achievement in reading, writing and maths. The strategic decisions made about the teaching of RE could be shared with other schools.

As a result of their analysis of this format for self-evaluation reports, members realise that they would like to see the proforma adjusted so that schools are asked to include:

- Data to show whether children are attaining at or above their expected levels
- An analysis of strengths, priorities for improvement and barriers to further development
- Outline information about how RE is timetabled and who teaches it eg weekly or blocked in half terms; taught by class teacher, during PPA, by HLTA or by a single teacher throughout the school.

SACRE members thanked the headteacher of Glebe and the leader of teaching and learning who completed this self-evaluation, for being amongst the first to submit a report to SACRE and at short notice. Rachel Bowerman will send feedback to Donna Barrett and Lorraine Monteiro and invite them to attend a future SACRE meeting.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

Further discussion

Secondary RE: a member questioned whether secondary schools were equipped to follow through on the foundations for RE built in the primary schools. It was suggested that the current

emphasis on Maths and Science at secondary level might militate against building up a strong RE department. On the other hand, primary schools are intensely aware of Reading, Writing and Maths in the curriculum and yet some still manage to provide very strong RE.

It would be interesting to know how RE is taught especially in view of the current constraints on the subject. Do schools still have subject specialists or is RE taught by class teachers?

Resources: a member queried if schools are satisfied with their resources. Her faith group (the Baha'i community) are currently trying to build collections of resources to help schools. The report on Glebe states that the school enjoys good resources.

Format: the format of the report follows the proposals of Harrow head teachers. Some members felt that the presentation by Shaftsbury School at the last meeting though not evaluative, gave more of a flavour of RE at that school. The Glebe report is evaluative. Members would like to see some space for narrative as well as evaluation. They would also like a space for "next steps" and how previous "next steps" have been implemented and any limiting factors.

8. Review of Harrow Agreed Syllabus

a) LA Funding for the revision of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus Conference

Rachel Bowerman tabled a letter from the LA. This announced that SACRE has been allocated funding of £12,260 for the revision of the agreed syllabus.

Matthew Stone opened this item with a report of the Chairs' group meeting held on 7th February 2014. Paddy O'Dwyer, from Harrow ESSO (Educational Strategy and School Organisation) had attended this meeting which was devoted to consideration of how to take a review of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus forward. The grant allocated by the LA will fund up to 12 days of advice and writing time (£6000). The rest of the grant will be used for consultation with teachers, an away day, design costs, administrative support and the launch of the new syllabus. The Chairs' Group had recommended that the new Syllabus should be published in electronic format only and not in hard copy.

Mike Bishop then continued this report. He explained that consideration will be given to what form the agreed syllabus will take. Previously it had largely followed the non-statutory national framework published by the QCA. A new non-statutory national curriculum framework has been published by the RE Council. It proposes three attainment targets:

- Know about & understand a range of religions and worldviews
- Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews
- Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews

There is also a need to provide support for teachers, but this would be separately funded.

Harrow could simply adopt this new framework, but although it gives examples alongside the generic curriculum statements, these do not systematically exemplify what the requirements would look like for each faith tradition. The advantage of Harrow having its own Agreed Syllabus would be that examples from all the faith traditions represented in the RE syllabus could be included alongside the generic requirements.

Some discussion followed in which the following points were made:

- It is crucial to have sound guidance and signposting.
- Subject knowledge is crucial especially when RE is often taught by non-specialists
- The context for teaching RE is very different from when the last Agreed Syllabus was drafted
- At the time of the previous Agreed Syllabus, Harrow had a full time RE advisor who did not have the same time constraints as the present advisor to SACRE who combines this role with a heavy work load as a School Improvement Partner.
- A suggestion was made as to whether media students from secondary schools and tertiary colleges could be used to film and record examples of good practice in RE. These records could be used as a resource and support for teachers. It was agreed that this was an exciting idea, but Rachel Bowerman reminded members that the syllabus is a statutory requirement and so must take priority.

- As well as being able to include a wider selection of examples, as mentioned above, a further benefit of adapting the RE Council framework is that the consultation process in itself develops knowledge and understanding of the subject. Also, when the new syllabus is launched, further beneficial spin-offs occur in the form of training.
- The young people consulted about their experience of RE could, if appropriate, be put forward for the “Young Ambassadors” scheme. *See 4 above.*
- There is a need for training to enable RE coordinators to be more effective in the oversight and monitoring of the teaching of RE by non specialists.
- PE has received national funding which has raised its profile in schools. Despite this, Senior Leadership teams rarely observe PE teaching either by class teachers or outside coaches.
- The British Humanist Association has recently updated their website including a section on Humanism in Schools which is an excellent resource. There must be other quality resources on the Internet

Members were in favour of Harrow producing its own Agreed Syllabus, using the national guidance but expanding and developing this to make a more comprehensive and supportive framework.

b) Proposed methodology and time line

One of the meeting dates for this year (11th September) has been allocated for the Agreed Syllabus Conference and an extra committee meeting scheduled for 1st October. *See 12 below.* There has been an initial consultation of teachers and they have been supportive of using the RE Council framework as the starting point for developing a local agreed syllabus. Drafting the syllabus will take about a term. The project must be completed within the next financial year. It is envisaged that instead of frequent meetings, small groups of faith representatives and teachers will work together to review the draft at regular intervals.

c) National regional update including “Old Localism, New Localism: what does the future hold for RE in schools?” a debate at Brunel University on 6th March 2014.

The Chair introduced this item. She had come straight from the debate at Brunel University to this meeting. The programme included presentations by Janet Orchard who was a project manager for the RE Council Review of RE and Lesley Prior, Chair of NASACRE.

The national picture is that the government is not very interested in RE. There was some discussion of the make-up of SACRE committees and how they relate to other organisations. England has a special relationship with the teaching of RE and this is the envy of many other countries where RE is not taught in schools. It is essential for the future of civic responsibility that we continue to stress the importance of RE. There is some debate at present about where RE is going: making room for RE would make a difference. Rachel Bowerman added that the debate about the teaching of RE in schools is a long-standing one.

Information Items: improving SACRE’s effectiveness

9. Reports from National RE Associations

- **RE Council newsletter:** Rachel Bowerman recommended this publication which can be viewed on the RE Council’s website. A new report has been published on the impact of RE on cohesive communities. The results are welcome news although not unsurprising. The newsletter has already been discussed in the context of Sara Younger’s presentation and the examination data *See 4 and 6 above.*

10. Reports from SACRE partners locally and nationally

a) Harrow Interfaith Council

Varsha Dodhia had already left the meeting so there was no further reporting on interfaith activities. The forthcoming “Jewish Living Experience” exhibition has already been covered under item 4.

b) Faith Communities

Mosaic centre: Gill Ross reported on the cooperative action between three synagogues – the Harrow and Wembley Progressive Synagogue, the Middlesex New Synagogue and the Hatch End Masorti Synagogue – to form a new community centre which will be known as “Mosaic”. This will allow each synagogue to celebrate services in its own tradition and the centre will also serve as a community centre.

11. AOB

- Camilla Bath congratulated the Rev’d Matthew Stone on his appointment as rector to St John’s, Stanmore. He will be much missed at All Saints and at Stag Lane schools where he is Chair of Governors. St John’s is very fortunate to have acquired him and the community in Stanmore are looking forward to working with him.
- Phiroza Gan-Kotwal has been in hospital for 28 days. But she is here this evening – her first outing since she came out of hospital. The committee welcomed Phiroza Gan-Kotwal and expressed their admiration for her dedication.

12. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

Next meeting: Wednesday 25th June

A suggestion has been made earlier in the meeting that this should be held at Pinner Synagogue as it coincides with the “Jewish Living Experience” exhibition. However, Rachel Bowerman reminded members that the committee had previously agreed (14th June 2011, minute 8) not to hold meetings in places of worship, as it might preclude some members from attending.

It was therefore agreed to investigate holding this meeting in a building separate to the Synagogue or at the Civic Centre as usual.

Future meetings in 2014:

Thursday 11th September (Agreed Syllabus conference)

Wednesday 1st October

Thursday 4th December

Proposed date for spring meeting in 2015:

5th March: this coincides with Purim so an alternative date will be found.

The Meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)

20+ ideas for SACREs

1. Contact your local MP and encourage membership of the APPG
2. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) recently passed a resolution that the union should be properly represented on all SACREs so delegates are encouraged to lobby other unions. Members of the NASUWT executive are also taking this forward.
3. Engage with initial teacher training (ITT) providers and get some of them involved in SACRE or presenting to a meeting
4. Engage with the media locally and nationally and with social media to counter wider public ignorance
5. Encourage schools to sign up for the [RE Quality Mark](#) (REQM)
6. Think about who is in charge of academy chains and free schools in your area. Teachers from these schools can be included as representatives in Group C of SACREs
7. Get your local authority scrutiny committee to engage with the Annual SACRE Report
8. Develop youth SACREs and encourage young people's contributions
9. Hold SACRE meetings in schools and include a training session for teachers
10. Report schools which do not include RE or do it properly to the local authority
11. Make links with post 16 RE
12. Develop a resource collection for loan to schools
13. Have a sub-committee to support and deliver collective worship in schools
14. Sponsor competitions eg artwork for inclusion in the annual report
15. Work to support faith group visitors into schools
16. Develop a young ambassadors project
17. Engage governors. The information included in pages 40-41 of the Governors Handbook about RE is not clear and NASACRE might submit a rewrite
18. Rotate chairmanship through the four groups of SACRE
19. Engage teachers in working parties when developing a locally agreed syllabus. Process is important not just the end product and this involves and develops teachers
20. Find out if there are any subject leaders of education (SLEs) you could work with. You can find out from the National College website if there are any RE SLEs in your areas
21. Ensure whatever you do has a positive impact on teaching and learning in classrooms.

[Subscribe](#)

[Share](#) ▼

[Past Issues](#)

[Translate](#) ▼

[RSS](#) 



June 2014

In This Issue

- Introduction
- APPG on RE
- Young Ambassadors for RE
- EAG on RE
- RE Professional Development Portal
- RE Council Website
- RE Today virtual seminars
- 3FF recruitment: Schools Coordinator & Schools Officer
- Updated resources on Humanism for Schools
- British Humanist Association: free day-conference for RE teachers
- Animated videos on Humanism, narrated by Stephen Fry
- 'The Young Atheist's Handbook: Lessons for Living a Good Life without God'
- Hindu Council UK: GCSE resources on Hinduism
- Face to Faith video conferences
- 'What Price Peace?': a new project from Barnabas in Schools
- Train to be a Section 48 Inspector
- Board of Deputies: 'Jewish Living Experience' exhibition
- SCALA: Special offer to REC members
- PGCE Religious Education places at Bishop Grosseteste University
- 3forRE support for professional development
- Lord Karan Bilimoria appointed as Chancellor of Birmingham University
- Professor Stephen Parker awarded Chair in the History of Religions and Education

Keep Up With Us

 [Facebook](#)

 [Twitter](#)



Introduction

The beginning of May saw the preparations for the RE Council's AGM draw to a close, as Member representatives



gathered in Cardiff for the meeting. The day was a great opportunity for the RE Council to work more closely with its members and colleagues in Wales, as well as hear an address from Huw Lewis, Minister for Education and Skills, who talked about the place for RE in the new curriculum. The AGM was also an opportunity for RE Council business, including the elections of a new Chair, Dr Joyce Miller, and

Treasurer, Rosemary Rivett, who will take over from John Keast and Trevor Cooling, respectively, in September. During the meeting, John Keast, who has served as Chair of the RE Council since 2011, was presented with a book of tributes from members and colleagues, which you can view or add to online on the [Padlet website](#).

APPG on RE

During the RE Council's Annual General Meeting Joyce Miller, who wrote the most recent [APPG report on RE's contribution to good community relations](#), led a discussion activity for member organisations. This activity focused on how the RE Council and its members could take forward the recommendations in the report. Joyce is currently writing a longer, more reflective piece on RE and community relations, which will be published on the RE Council website. The APPG will also be holding a meeting in July which will look at how the situation regarding teacher training and professional development in RE have changed since the publication of its first report in March 2013, which examined the supply of and support for teachers of RE (*'RE: the Truth Unmasked'*).

Young Ambassadors for RE



Over the last month, the ya4RE scheme has had further interest including a successful application from students at the Archbishop Sentamu Academy in Kingston upon Hull. Current Young Ambassadors from Redhill Academy have also had some very good media coverage in SecEd, which can be read on the [SecEd website](#).

EAG on RE

The EAG for RE has now been established with the support of the DfE and will work alongside similar sector led groups for other curriculum subjects. Its [first newsletter](#) has just been published and gives full details of the group's remit and membership. To sign up to receive future issues directly, please click [here](#).



RE Professional Development Portal

The **RE PD Portal** is designed as a one stop shop for teachers and others involved in RE to find out about professional development opportunities of all kinds. We are currently populating the database with opportunities for the next academic year. If you would like to submit information about any PD events or provisions please use the form on the **submissions page** of the website.

RE Council Website

New updates to the RE Council website include:

- **RE Report from the Chair:** in this month's blog post, John Keast, Chair of the RE Council, extends thanks to all of the staff, committees and members of the REC as he is due to step down in September. The blog also links to the **Report from the Chair** which was given at the RE Council's AGM in May.
 - **RE Council AGM:** the summary notes of the RE Council's AGM in May, which was held in Cardiff.
 - **Wales' Education Minister addresses the AGM:** Huw Lewis, Minister for Education in Wales, addressed members of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales at its annual general meeting
 - **RE Regional Strategy Pilot launched:** A new strategy for RE professional development has been launched. It aims to make sure there are more robust arrangements for training and supporting teachers of RE and is based on Recommendation 4 of the REC's Review of Religious Education in England (2013).
-

RE Today virtual seminars

Getting out of the classroom for CPD opportunities can be difficult; to support you RE Today Services are launching a range of termly virtual seminars, which you can take part online wherever you are. This term's online training includes:

- **Using story in Primary RE, Monday 16th June:** This online seminar will provide participants with an overview of how to use story in Primary RE, with practical ideas and a forum for discussion, plus downloadable training materials.
 - **Revising your KS3 for next year, Tuesday 24th June:** This online seminar is for anyone interested in the development of the 11-14 curriculum, taking on board the new RE Council Framework, plus fresh ways of shaping the RE curriculum, linking to other subjects and establishing the best of RE.
-

3FF recruitment: Schools Coordinator & Schools Officer

Would you like the opportunity to work with one of the UK's leading interfaith charities? The Schools Team at 3FF are recruiting for two exciting roles this summer:

- **Schools Coordinator**
- **Schools Officer**

The deadline for both roles is 10am, Monday 9th June. For more information and to apply for the opportunity to work as part of the dynamic and innovative education team at 3FF, see the **3FF website**.

Updated resources on Humanism for Schools

There are new and updated resources on Humanism for Schools, including guidance on SMSC for non-religious students, quizzes and case-studies, and printable posters for the classroom: see the [Humanism for Schools website](#) for further information.

British Humanist Association: free day-conference for RE teachers

The British Humanist Association, supported by Conway Hall Ethical Society, presents a free day-conference for Religious Education teachers to explore Humanism and the inclusion of non-religious perspectives in Religious Education. 10am - 4pm, Wednesday 16 July at Conway Hall, London Registration for teachers is free at the [BHA website](#).

Animated videos on Humanism, narrated by Stephen Fry

The British Humanist Association has produced four short animated videos on Humanism narrated by Stephen Fry on the themes How do we know what is true? What should we think about death? What makes something right or wrong? and How can I be happy?. Watch them at www.humanism.org.uk/thatshumanism.

'The Young Atheist's Handbook: Lessons for Living a Good Life without God'

The British Humanist Association has sent a free copy of '*The Young Atheist's Handbook: Lessons for Living a Good Life without God*' to every secondary school in England and Wales. Funded entirely from donations by thousands of people from all around the country, the initiative is part of the BHA's work to ensure that young people have access to resources that enable them to come to their own decisions about their values and beliefs. More information can be found on the [BHA website](#).

Hindu Council UK: GCSE resources on Hinduism

The Hindu Council UK have produced the following resources aimed at GCSE students studying Hinduism:

- [Basics, Rituals and Scriptures of Hinduism](#)
 - [Philosophy and practices in temple](#)
-

Face to Faith video conferences

Face to Faith, a project of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, have hosted two days of video conferences on the topic of human trafficking linked to faith and belief in May 2014. They hosted video conferences with special guests who are human trafficking activists or victims of trafficking themselves from different parts of the world. F2F's human trafficking resources (compiled with Stop

The Traffik) are free to registered Face to Faith schools. For more information, visit the [TBFF website](#).

'What Price Peace?': a new project from Barnabas in Schools

'What Price Peace?' is a new project from *Barnabas in Schools*, offering primary and middle schools a wide range of resources for exploring the First World War centenary in RE and other subjects. These include:

- [A teacher's resource book](#)
 - [Free downloads](#)
 - [CPD for teachers](#)
 - [Creative arts days in school](#)
-

Train to be a Section 48 Inspector

Pikuach inspection service, the statutory equivalent of Ofsted for Jewish religious education, are recruiting and training Section 48 inspectors to review all aspects of teaching, curriculum and pupil welfare in its diverse range of schools across the country. Pikuach inspectors also work with other faith communities, most recently involving a visit to Guru Nanak Sikh Academy in May, which was a valuable opportunity for educators to learn from each other's schools, lessons, and classroom practice. For more information and to apply, e-mail education@bod.org.uk.

Board of Deputies: 'Jewish Living Experience' exhibition

The South Wales Jewish Representative Council in association with the Board of Deputies of British Jews was delighted to present the '[Jewish Living Experience' Exhibition at The Senedd](#) (Welsh Assembly) in Cardiff, sponsored by Mohammad Ashgar, Assembly Member for South Wales East. The exhibition ran from 29th April – 15th May and was open to everyone including local schools, cub, guide and scout groups, and voluntary associations as well as persons of all faiths and none. The exhibition has travelled around the UK for over 35 years, and its residence in Cardiff was the first showing of all-new exhibits. For more information about the exhibition, which teaches about the basics of the Jewish faith through engaging stands, role-play items and puzzles, visit the [Board of Deputies of British Jews website](#).

SCALA: Special offer to REC members

SCALA, the School Chaplains and Leaders Association, is offering a special membership discount to Member Organisations of the RE Council: Join now and receive membership until 31 August 2014 (4 terms for the price of 3). For more information visit the [SCALA website](#).

PGCE Religious Education places at Bishop Grosseteste University

Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln still has places on the 2014-15 PGCE secondary RE course. We have an excellent reputation for training, employment and positive student experience,

and are a small community-based campus. If you know people who are considering teacher training but the course is full where they are, please point them in our direction. For further information contact Mark Plater, Tel: 01522 583630. Email: mark.plater@bishoptg.ac.uk

3forRE support for professional development

Engaged in an interesting RE project and wanting to reflect further on it? Or just keen to develop your understanding of RE? Why not consider completing an MA, with generous bursary support from Culham St Gabriel's Trust? Have a look on [the CStG website](#) to find out more, or contact Mark Plater to find out more about the Bishop Grosseteste University provision: Tel: 01522 583630; Email: mark.plater@bishoptg.ac.uk

Lord Karan Bilimoria appointed as Chancellor of Birmingham University

The REC would like to offer its congratulations to Lord Karan Bilimoria, who has just been appointed Chancellor of Birmingham University. Lord Bilimoria is one of the UK's leading international entrepreneurs. He is also a Crossbench Peer who is active in parliament across a wide range of matters including commerce, entrepreneurship, education, diplomacy, minorities' contributions and academia. He has also recently agreed to become a patron of the RE Council. We would like to congratulate him most warmly on this recognition of his work and look forward very much to his involvement with the RE Council.

Professor Stephen Parker awarded Chair in the History of Religions and Education

Belated but no less warm congratulations go to Professor Stephen Parker, who was awarded a Chair in the History of Religions and Education last year. Stephen has also recently received a Leverhulme Research Project Grant for a major study of changes in religious educational broadcasting - a subject of interest to many who work in RE. See the [University of Worcester website](#) for further details.

Copyright © 2014 Religious Education Council, All rights reserved.

MailChimp

To submit an entry to the next newsletter, e-mail a short paragraph along with a weblink to sophie@religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk by the 24th of the month.

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL: AGM, CARDIFF, 7 MAY 2014
CHAIR'S REPORT

This is my last report as Chair of the Council so I would like to reflect on the past three years as well as identify some issues for the future.

My thanks to the REC Board is not just a common courtesy but a genuine tribute to the commitment and quality of the contribution so many of them make to the cause of good RE for all young people in England and Wales. I want also to thank Sarah Smalley again for her tremendously hard work and effectiveness as Executive Officer of the Council, and to Sophie Agrotis as our Administrator and Finance Officer. Without these key people the Council could not function. I wish I had more time to extol their virtues and praise their achievements but as I do not I hope, nevertheless, they will accept this short tribute from the Chair as heartfelt and genuine.

Next I want to congratulate Dr Joyce Miller on her election as the new Chair of the REC. I hope she will find it as enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding as I have. I am very confident that the REC is in good hands, given the experience, qualities and expertise that she brings. Also, may I congratulate Rosemary Rivett on becoming our new Treasurer? Again, we have a worthy successor to Trevor, who I wish to single out for thanks. Looking after the money is vital in any organisation, but Trevor has had to do so in a very challenging period of change for the RE Council, and has done this extremely well.

I was elected Chair in May 2011, following Prof Brian Gates, to whom I gladly pay a further tribute today. In September of that year, the REC Board adopted its first Strategic Plan for the work of the Council. I mention this not only because it is of historical significance but also because it has guided my approach to chairing the Council and is the pattern for the rest of this report. Some of you might remember that I focussed on this plan in my first keynote address as Chair at the RE Community weekend at Wokefield Park at the end of September, somewhat controversially I believe! I make no apology for that or for the Plan itself as the means by which the RE Council has worked for the past three years as I think it has been key to the growth and effectiveness of the Council.

One of the most beguiling but yet largely useless pastimes of humanity is to ask "What if?" questions of history. "What if, 100 years ago next month, Gavrill Princip had missed when he fired his gun at the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo?" No first world war? No Hitler? But he did not, so the twentieth century turned out like it did. A useless speculation, of course, but not entirely so, for it is in reflecting on alternatives that we sometimes see the value (or not) of what did occur. So, what if there had not been a coalition government as the result of the 2010 General Election? What would have happened to our education systems and to RE itself if Labour had been elected for another term of office? What would we be going through now if the Conservatives had won outright? Where would RE be under an unrestricted Gove! The Strategic Plan of 2011 had to enable the RE Council to deal with a deep and unprecedented crisis in RE, which we are still experiencing to a certain extent, but which I believe we are coming through. I have experienced a very notable change in the attitude of both ministers and officials to me and to the Council since last summer. We have to continue to develop a positive relationship with the Department, whichever party or parties form a government. Be assured that we are working on that with a presence at the party conferences this year for the first time, and by continued conversations with opinion and policy makers. I have taken steps also to have a meeting with the Labour Education team.

The essence of the strategic plan is the identification of specific objectives and planning for their achievement through the work of Board committees. So I begin with the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee, chaired for most of the time by Mike Castelli, whom I should like to thank again. The main achievement was the publication of the RE Council Review of RE in England last October, a major landmark in the history of the Council and a foundation document for some time to come. Even if regarded

as controversial and inadequate in some quarters, it was not just the best the RE Community was capable of at the time but has allowed the RE to respond positively and actively to the English National Curriculum Review. It is also the basis for new activity by the Council through the Expert Subject Group alongside such groups for the NC subjects, supported and part funded by the Department for Education. The new Chair of the Committee and the Subject Group is Dave Francis. Thank you Dave for all you and your committee are doing.

Part of the revision of the Strategic Plan agreed by the Board earlier this year is the establishment of a separate Qualifications Committee. The challenge of qualifications reform is huge and risky, right across the curriculum, and no less so for RE. Deborah Weston chairs the new Qualifications committee - another Board member I want to single out for thanks and praise. Her indefatigable efforts on behalf of RE and RE teachers are immense and long standing. Time does not allow me to mention them all, but her contribution to the work of the Council has been invaluable and very effective as Company Secretary, and now she is taking on this major challenge of RE qualifications reform. The process is complex and means Deborah is working with the DfE, Awarding organisations, Ofqual and REC member bodies. The process is also very rushed to meet Mr Gove's deadlines, but it is better for RE to be included in the list of subjects for first teaching in 2016 than be left behind. Thank you Deborah all you and your committee are doing. We wish this new Committee well.

The longest serving committee is the PR committee, chaired for so long by John Gay who was instrumental in finding the funding for much of our PR work since 2010. Again, I have no time to rehearse the work of this committee but let me say how successful it has been, and still is, in raising the awareness of RE with the media, politicians and the public. Scarcely a month goes by when RE and the REC is not in the news. The PR committee and our PR consultants, 3:9 lie behind the scenes of all that publicity. I want to thank them, and Jeremy Taylor for the thorough and effective way he is now chairing the Committee and the joint PR Group with NATRE/RE Today Services, funded for two years by Culham St Gabriel's. Part of the work of the Committee is its support of the RE APPG whose second enquiry report on RE and Community Relations was launched in March. I thank Joyce for the excellent work she is doing on the fuller version of this report yet to come.

One of the gravest issues facing RE, and a constituent of the critical time we are in, is the lack of specialist and trained teachers of RE, the supply of new trainees and the support for existing RE teachers. The role of the teacher of RE is the single most important role there is in our subject (as in all subjects) and should like to take this opportunity to report that on behalf of the RE Council I paid tribute to Mrs Ann McGuire, tragically stabbed to death in Leeds last month, and extended our condolences to her family, colleagues and community. These were acknowledged and appreciated.

The Professional Development Committee is taking forward a series of proposals, many based on the first RE APPG report from March 2013, to try to help alleviate this pressing issue – one to which the government seems wilfully both blind and careless, despite extensive representation from across the whole RE community. Phil Leivers chairs this committee, which also looks after the REC interests in the RE Quality Mark, the legacy of Resilience, Learning outside the classroom, the new PD Portal, and the new regional strategy for RE teacher training and support, which was launched just a week or two ago, with pilot projects funded by Culham St Gabriel's. And now there is the new review of ITT courses, which Mr Gove announced last week. We do not know what will come from this but I am not holding my breath! I want to thank Phil and his committee, and Mark Chater, for the way they are taking these matters forward.

Over the past three years the Council has grown with several new member organisations. The rules by which we operate, including the membership criteria, have been looked after by the Governance Committee, chaired until recently by Deborah and supported by Peter Ward, whose quiet, consistent and efficient support for the Council has been extensive over a long period. The new Chair is Sarah Lane-Cawte whose

support for the Council has also been very positive and long-standing, and I thank her for taking this work on..

The last of the committees is certainly not the least in importance. The Resources Committee may be the least glamorous, though that cannot be said of its Chair, Sandra Teacher who has looked after this committee for some time now, and achieved much in terms of our office accommodation, our recruitment of patrons and other forms of support for the Council. This morning we made a change in our subscription arrangements to try to increase the resources available to the Council for its core costs. The Resources Committee is constantly trying to do that, and I thank Sandra for heading up these efforts. Again there is more to do, because although we can see ourselves through the next financial year, the economics of a charity like ours (and others) are never that secure. A new office space is needed from the beginning of July, and I had hoped we could report on where that will be, but we are still working on this.

This brief resume of the work of our committees fails to do justice to them and their members, but I hope it gives you an idea of how much the Board does, what the current position is, and what is still on the agenda. Sarah and Sophie coordinate and administer all this! In this report so far you will perhaps have noted that some of the recommendation of the RE Review are being taken forward:

- the national Curriculum Framework for RE and recommendation 6 on assessment by the C and A committee
- the reform of GCSE by the Q committee (recommendation 3)
- the regional training hubs by the PD committee (recommendation 4)

The Board itself is taking others forward though in ways that have yet to be fully determined.

Recommendation 1 is about effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating RE. A project proposal for funding to take this forward has been submitted to the Jerusalem Trust but the outcome is not yet known. If successful, there will be an activity to try to coordinate all the ways in which we do have information, to get a better picture of how well RE is (or is not) thriving in our schools. Recommendation 2 (to pursue the challenges around the existing 'settlement' for RE) is a longer term objective which the new Chair and Board will need to decide how to take forward, possibly in conjunction with a revision of the 2010 Guidance on RE in England published by the then Department of Children Schools and Families. The DfE have given us the rights to the text of this document, which is now out of date in so many ways. It is perhaps opportune and timely to begin this in the 70th anniversary year of the 1944 Education Act, but any work on this will need to be sensitive and collaborative in approach.

The only other recommendation is number 5 – “new structures and networks within and across the RE community so that its expertise is coordinated and utilised more efficiently”. This is a contentious but important matter. We have come such a long way together in the past few years in representing RE to government, the media and the public; in working together on projects such as those listed in this report. The REC is a much better, widely- accepted and respected national forum for RE than it has ever been, so there is much to be pleased about and proud of. However, I repeat what I have said before – we do need to work together better, more smartly and more efficiently. Our current structures still do not allow us to do that, so included in the terms of reference of the Governance Committee is an additional objective – to take forward recommendation 5 by putting in place a new process for greater partnership working, with PREG and others”. The Governance Committee has yet to put this in place, but I commend to you this suggestion, that it establishes a specific 'Theory of Change' group to prepare a set of recommendations to the Board and the Council for a reformed RE Council, and a second strategic plan with revised aims, purposes, functions and funding.

It is hard to overstate both the importance and challenge of this task; it cannot be easily or quickly achieved, but I have no doubt that it can be done given sufficient goodwill and vision. I have no doubt that it should be done in order to have an even better national forum for RE. Not only does the changed education landscape require it (if the RE community does not look after and effectively organise itself, nobody else will); not only

does the economics of our changed times require it (we cannot afford the duplication and overlap that occurs even now); not only do our pupils and teachers require it (they deserve the best representation of RE that we can organise), but the need for unity requires it. Unity is not uniformity, and unity must exist within diversity, but for all the stakeholders in RE to be able to work together efficiently and effectively in the common cause of good RE for all young people in all schools in our countries is paramount. The backlash to the RE Review In some quarters reveals that the RE Council as presently constituted is still not fully effective in its role as a national forum, that there are still issues of policy and direction that need more work. For example, the philosophical issues of RE and RS surface frequently; there are still divergent views on the role of RE in schools; and there is tension at times between different sectors (and members of the Council come to that about RE in them!). Such issues and tensions as these may remain unresolved given the diversity of membership of the Council, but if so, we have to find an even more positive and workable way of handling them than we do at present. Unless we do, I fear that what I have called the unique but diverse RE “brand” in England and Wales may be at risk. The Strategic Plan has therefore been given an additional objective for the Board to work on – “to provide policy and direction for RE”. I regret that we have not made more progress on this during my time as Chair, but I think it will be a pressing challenge in the future.

I regret too that we have not made more headway in forging links with those representing RE in the other nations of the UK. It is a delight that we are in Wales for this AGM, and I hope that from it will come better cross-border liaison than we have now within the Council. There are also advantages in having greater dialogue with those responsible for RE in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, where I believe an appetite for this exists if only we can find the means of satisfying it. Wider European developments in RE continue (we think of Professor Robert Jackson’s work in Oslo and various research projects, and EFTRE for example) there is still more that we could gain if we had better links with our European partners in RE. I regret that I have not been able to facilitate this in my time.

But today is not a time for regrets as far as I am concerned. It is a day of gratitude for what has been done, and is still being done, by so many dedicated, committed and professional people right across our countries, including thousands of teachers whom we represent today. It is a day of confidence in what Joyce and the Board, Sarah and Sophie, and others, will go on to do. It is a day of optimism for the future of good RE, never more high profile and never more needed in our world. With all of us working even better together, that future can be secure.

I thank you for the privilege of having been Chair of the REC (or as some would say, Captain of the good ship RE) for the past three years.

John Keast