

**HARROW SACRE**  
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9 MARCH 2017**

**Attendance**

**Group A**

\* Mercedes Afnan  
\* Ven Sumana Sramaner  
\* Mike Bishop  
\* Neville Ransley  
\* Ciara O'Flaherty  
*A Vijay Hirani*  
\* David Cryer  
*A Varsha Dodhia*  
*A Gill Ross*  
\* Doreen Samuels  
*A Zafar Khalid*  
~ *Zia Baig*  
\* Asad Omar  
\* Paramjit Singh-Kohli  
\* Phiroza Gan-Kotwal

**Religious traditions and Christian churches**

Baha'i  
Buddhist  
Christian (Free Church Federal Council)  
Christian (Catholic)  
Christian (Catholic)  
Hindu (Swaminarayan)  
Humanist (Harrow Humanists)  
Jain  
Jewish  
Jewish  
Muslim (representing Harrow Muslim Council)  
Muslim  
Muslim  
Sikh  
Zoroastrian

**Group B**

\* Mary Abbott  
\* Revd Kate Blake  
*A Revd James Power*

**Church of England**

**Group C**

~ *Manju Radia*  
\* Alison Stowe (Chair)  
\* Teri-Louise O'Brien

**Teachers' Associations**

**Group D**

\* Cllr Camilla Bath Conservative (Vice Chair)  
*A Cllr Ghazanfar Ali Labour*  
\* Cllr Kareema Marikar Labour

**Local Authority**

*A Cllr Simon Brown Labour (reserve)*  
*A Cllr Manji Kara Conservative (reserve)*  
*A Cllr Chika Amadi Labour (reserve)*

**Advisor to the SACRE**

\* Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

**Observer**

Ahmed Azam (EU and National Leader at Defra)

**Clerk**

\* Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

\* *denotes presence*

*A denotes absence with apologies*

~ *denotes absence without apologies*

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Ahmed Azam who was attending as an observer.

**2. Apologies for absence:**

**RESOLVED:** To note apologies for absence from Varsha Dodhia, Zafar Khalid, Gill Ross, Revd James Power, Vijay Hirani and Cllr Ghazanfar Ali.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Zia Baig

Group C: Manju Radia

**3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016** (*previously circulated*)

p.3. top line: insert "be" between "not" and "proportional"

pp.4-5. Numbering: item 12 should be 11 and 13 should be 12.

With these amendments the minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

The amended minutes will be posted on the SACRE website.

**Action: Clerk**

**4. Matters arising from the minutes**

**All matters arising were covered on the agenda.**

**5. Harrow SACRE Constitution** (*previously circulated*)

Some amendments were suggested for Appendix B:

Faith headings should be consistent with those in Appendix A apart from Islam which should be changed to Muslim.

The nominating group for the Sikh representative should be "Brent Sikh Centre, Kingsbury".

The nominating group for the Zoroastrian representative should be "Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, The Zoroastrian Centre, Rayners Lane"

Each constituent group voted on whether to adopt the constitution.

**With these amendments, members voted unanimously in favour of adopting the constitution.**

**RESOLVED: To adopt the constitution.**

**The Chair recorded a vote of thanks to Mike Bishop for his work on preparing the constitution.**

*Mike Bishop then left the meeting.*

**6. The role of the SEF for RE Leaders**

Teri-Louise O'Brien introduced this item. The Chair asked each member to note "five fabulous aspects" of Teri-Louise's work.

Teri Louise explained that SEF stands for "Self Evaluation Form"; her role as RE co-ordinator for Norbury Primary School is to assess RE, using the same criteria as an Ofsted inspector. The delivery of RE at Norbury is linked to the SACRE framework.

Norbury is a very diverse school where 56 nationalities are represented and 60 languages spoken.

Overall, Teri-Louise judged RE teaching and learning at Norbury to be Good. She felt that there are still some areas for development at KS2, especially in providing more challenge. This is a focus in other subjects as well. Teri-Louise outlined for members the different facets of her assessment:

**Pupil voice:** two pupils from each year group talked to Teri-Louise about what they are learning in RE and what aspects of RE they most enjoy. Children indicated that they would like more role play.

**Visits:** every year group visited a place of worship.

**Links with the Community:** members of the community are invited to events at Norbury e.g. the Norbury Day in March when the school celebrates world religions.

**Assemblies:** every three weeks, Norbury holds a community assembly focussing on festivals from different faiths, e.g. Holi and Easter. The assemblies do not constitute a RE lesson, but can be used as a platform for a RE lesson.

**Teaching, Learning and Assessment:** RE is assessed every term. Teri-Louise also gives a presentation on RE to governors. This serves to emphasise the importance of RE in the curriculum. The national emphasis on Maths and English can lead to slippage in other subjects.

**Resources:** an audit is made of RE resources. This demonstrates that the school is well resourced for all the major religions. Resources are up to date. There are regular displays of artefacts relating to different faiths.

**Questionnaires:** the feedback from staff questionnaires indicated that staff would like more CPD.

**Next steps:** next steps are determined by the outcomes of pupil voice and staff surveys. Teri-Louise organised some INSET for teachers to support them in providing more role play in their RE teaching. Teri-Louise will monitor the success of this with another Pupil Voice exercise.

**Value of RE:** feedback from staff and pupils indicates that RE is enjoyed, especially the celebrations and ceremonies from different faith traditions. Children also learn values and share personal experiences and stories.

The school has noticed that the behaviour gap is diminishing as children learn about mutual respect and tolerance. They are more knowledgeable and more forthcoming. No parents have withdrawn their children from RE lessons or the community religious assemblies.

**Vision statement:** Teri-Louise concluded her presentation by reading the school's vision statement which encapsulates the values of respect and tolerance where difference is celebrated and every child valued as an individual within an inclusive and supportive community.

Teri-Louise will circulate her presentation to the committee

**Action: Teri-Louise**

## Questions

(Doreen Samuels): was there any resistance from staff concerning RE or the way it is taught? Teri Louise had anticipated barriers by running a staff survey: she also organised INSET which included guidance on creating RE lessons that are accessible and fun. From the survey, she knew that staff lacked confidence in teaching religions other than Christianity, so she was able to address this by providing appropriate information and resources.

(Paramjit Singh-Kohli): how was the improvement in behaviour measured? All behaviour incidents are logged on a data base, so it is possible to monitor the reduction in incidents.

(Paramjit Singh-Kohli): does the school teach British Values? The school teaches British Values; these are placed within the context of a world culture.

(Cllr Kareema Marikar): are parents invited to community assemblies? Parents are invited and a good cross section of parents attend.

(Cllr Kareema Marikar): how can these values of tolerance and mutual respect be more widely disseminated? Cllr Kareema described her feelings of fear surrounding the expression of religious belief, experienced on a recent visit to India. The Chair emphasized that good RE incorporates good teaching and mutual understanding. Lesley Prior added that, from her knowledge of RE in other European countries, England has a unique tradition which should be treasured. Her European colleagues are astonished that an organization like SACRE can exist where members of different faiths and none meet to agree a curriculum that is then delivered to a high standard.

(David Cryer): does Norbury work with other schools? Norbury has been approached by Marlborough and Grimsdyke Primary Schools. Teri-Louise welcomes visits from RE coordinators from other schools. Lesley Prior added that borough wide INSET provides opportunities for teachers to work together, share good practice and offer mutual support. RE coordinators can be isolated. Opportunities for coming together should be welcomed. Celebration is important.

(David Cryer): is there provision for children who are not believers? Teri-Louise explained that there are opportunities to reflect after an assembly: a large percentage of children follow a religion but there is space within prompts for the reflection for those who are not believers.

(Ciara O'Flaherty): why did Teri-Louise judge RE at Norbury as Good rather than Outstanding? Teri-Louise felt that this might be a typical example of teachers' tendencies to undervalue their work; she would welcome an observer from SACRE. As noted above, she felt that there should be a greater element of challenge, especially at KS2. This judgment relates to last year. This year RE may be outstanding at Norbury.

(Mercedes Afnan): is it possible to develop a structure that can be followed by other schools? Teri-Louise gives advice to other RE co-ordinators. Norbury has an open door policy and works through celebrating common ground.

(Mercedes Afnan): are the minority religions, Baha'i, Zoroastrianism and Jainism, represented on the curriculum? These religions are taught and celebrated. Representatives from these religions visit the school. Children have also visited the Zoroastrian Centre and the Jain Temple.

(Asad Omar): how does Norbury promote mutual understanding and respect among parents? Teri-Louise confirmed the importance of disseminating these values to parents as well as children. She would be happy to visit the Islamic Free School to talk about the connections between different religions and advise parents. Norbury has community ambassadors who work with groups of parents.

(Cllr Camilla Bath): Councillor Camilla reflected on the many questions her daughter had asked about religious observances when she was at school. She wished Teri-Louise could have taught her daughter. Teri-Louise responded by saying how much she would have liked to have heard these questions asked in her classroom.

There were no further questions

Teri-Louise would be delighted if representatives from SACRE would visit Norbury. Members of the committee also suggested that Norbury children should make a presentation at a SACRE meeting or borough INSET.

Lesley Prior concluded the presentation with an endorsement of the wonderful work that Teri-Louise is doing at Norbury. This would not be possible without the support of her Head Teacher, Lou Browning. This support is a crucial factor; there may be other RE coordinators who are not being given the opportunity to put their passion for RE into

practice. RE makes a very positive difference to children, colleagues and the wider community.

**Lesley Prior recorded a vote thanks to Teri-Louise O'Brien and Lou Browning.**

Lesley collected the "five fabulous aspects" from members which she will collate and circulate.

**Action: Lesley Prior**

### **Purim**

*Before item 7 on the agenda, the Chair invited Doreen Samuels to tell members something about the Jewish Festival of Purim.*

*Doreen explained that Purim celebrates a time when the Jewish minority was about to be exterminated; however, the king's consort, Queen Esther, who was herself Jewish, managed to turn the scales with the result that the Jews were saved and the advisor who had advocated their destruction was put to death.*

*The Festival of Purim takes place on Sunday: there are four injunctions for the festival:*

- *To feast*
- *To give presents of food to friends*
- *To give money to the less fortunate*
- *To read from the scroll written by Queen Esther and her uncle*

*In the Orthodox tradition of Judaism, women play a small part in public worship, although they have an important role in the home; however, women are now holding readings for themselves and sharing traditional food. Doreen shared traditional pastries with members of the committee.*

## **7. NASACRE News**

- **NASACRE survey** (*previously circulated and link included on the agenda*)  
Members agreed that the best way forward would be to complete the survey at a Chairs' Meeting. Members could make their views known to the Chairs of their groups and other interested members could attend the Chairs' Meeting.  
**This was agreed for Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April from 4-6pm in the Conservative Office Conference Room** (kindly offered by Cllr Camilla Bath).  
Members wishing to add their views to the survey should pay particular attention to section 3. The deadline for the survey is 30<sup>th</sup> April.

**Action: Chairs and members of the committee**

## **8. Annual report** (*previously circulated*)

The annual report is complete and has been submitted. It will be posted on the SACRE website.

## **9. ASC Launch**

The Chair reported that there are still some final details to sort out regarding the funding for printing and publicity. Patrick O'Dwyer is a good advocate for the Agreed Syllabus and Harrow Council is very supportive. Teri-Louise and Ciara have offered their schools as possible venues and Doreen Samuels indicated that her synagogue could be made available.

Lesley indicated that schools need the syllabus now in order to prepare for its implementation for September. Revd Kate strongly supported this.

**Members agreed that the Agreed Syllabus should be sent out to schools straight away without waiting for the launch date to be fixed.**

**The Chair will ensure that this is done.**

**Action: Chair**

## **10. Publications**

- **Days of Religious Observance – guidance for schools**  
Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Mercedes Afnan and Doreen Samuels have updated the Days of Religious observance for the coming year for the Sikh, Baha'i and Jewish communities. The Clerk invited representatives of other faith groups to send her next year's dates if they are available as it is helpful to schools to have as much advance

notice as possible. Otherwise she will update the publication from the SHAP calendar when it comes out in July.

**Action: members who have not yet submitted dates and Clerk**

#### 11. News from Faith Groups

- **Homeless people at Temple underground station:** Paramjit Singh-Kohli informed the committee that members of the Sikh community are distributing food to homeless people at Temple Underground station.
- **Nisa Nashim:** Doreen Samuels described her involvement with this Jewish and Muslim Women's Social Action group. On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March, the University of Westminster hosted the Nisa Nashim Inaugural Conference: "Challenging the Narrative": the aim of the group is to change negative stereotypes about Jewish and Muslim faiths and create connections between female representatives of both communities. This is a mirror to Mitzvah Day which takes place on 19 November this year.

#### 12. Any other business

- **"Religions are not Monoliths" Conference:** Lesley Prior and Alison Stowe attended this joint NASACRE and AREIAC (Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants) Conference. The two main speakers were Dr Abdullah Trevathan, Senior Lecturer in Education at Roehampton University who spoke on "Islam beyond the Monolith" and Dr Robert Paul Reiss, Canon Emeritus of Westminster who spoke on "Liberal Christianity". Lesley reflected that it was a welcome opportunity to be thinking about the essential truths of RE rather than the latest government edict.
- **Tell MAMA:** Ahmed Azam drew members' attention to this national organisation that allows people to report any incidents of anti-Muslim abuse. MAMA stands for Measuring Anti Muslim Attacks.
- **Home Office Islamic Network:** this is one of the informal faith-based networks recognised by the Home Office to provide advice and insights into religion and belief. Ahmed Azam will keep members posted of any events organised by this network.  
*Clerk's note:* other faith based networks recognised by the Home Office include Home Office Christians, The Hindu Connection and the Home Office Sikh Association.

#### 13. Future Dates:

**RE Leaders CPD: Tuesday 21 March 4-6 pm at Harrow Arts Centre  
Thursday 29 June 4-6 pm at Harrow Arts Centre**

**NASACRE AGM and Conference: Tuesday 16 May 2017 in York**

The theme of the conference is "Preparing for Life in Britain today: the contribution of RE"  
Keynote speakers: Dr Joyce Millar, Associate Fellow in the Religions and Education Research Unit at the University of Warwick and Professor Aaqil Ahmed who has been Head of Religion and Ethics for both the BBC and Channel 4.

**Any members interested in attending the SACRE AGM and Conference should contact Alison Stowe.**

**Future SACRE dates:**

Thurs 29 June 2017 – **Note date change from 22 June.** (Apologies: Neville Ransley)  
Tues 26 September 2017  
Tues 5 December 2017  
Wednesday 7 March 2018

**The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The Meeting closed at 9.20pm**

**Signed:**

**(Chair)**

**(Date)**