

**HARROW SACRE**  
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 29 JUNE 2017**

**Attendance**

**Group A**

\* Mercedes Afnan  
*A Ven Sumana Sramaner*  
\* Mike Bishop  
*A Neville Ransley*  
\* Ciara O'Flaherty  
\* Vijay Hirani  
\* David Cryer  
\* Varsha Dodhia  
\* Gill Ross  
\* Doreen Samuels  
~ *Zafar Khalid*  
~ *Zia Baig*  
\* Asad Omar  
*A 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)  
\* Cllr Ghazanfar Ali Labour  
~ *Cllr Kareema Marikar Labour*

**Local Authority**

*A Cllr Simon Brown Labour (reserve)*  
*A Cllr Manji Kara Conservative (reserve)*  
*A Cllr Margaret Davine Labour (reserve)*

**Advisor to the SACRE**

\* Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

**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.

**2. Apologies for absence:**

**RESOLVED:** To note apologies for absence from Ven Sumaner Sramaner, Neville Ransley and Paramjit Singh-Kohli. Retrospective apologies from Revd James Power.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Zafar Khalid and Zia Baig

Group C: Manju Radia

**3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017 (previously circulated)**

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

**4. Matters arising from the minutes**

**p.2. Item 3. Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> December:** the minutes had been posted on the website

**p.3. Item 6. The Role of the SEF for RE Leaders:** Teri-Louise O'Brien had circulated her presentation.

**p.3. Item 6. The Role of the SEF for RE Leaders:** the Chair has compiled a spreadsheet of the comments received in response to Teri-Louise's talk. She will circulate the spreadsheet to members.

**Action: Chair**

**p.5. Item 7. NASACRE news: NASACRE survey:** *see item 8 below.*

**p.5. Item 9. Agreed Syllabus Launch:** *see item 5 below.*

**p.5. Item 10. Publications: Days of Religious Observance:** the Clerk is updating the Days of Religious Observance. Thanks to Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Mercedes Afnan and Doreen Samuels who have sent in their future days of religious observance. Schools are already making enquiries. The Clerk will check future dates in the SHAP calendar which should appear shortly. Meanwhile, if members of Group A, who have not already done so, could send in forthcoming dates for 2017-18, she can update the calendar before the publication of the SHAP calendar.

**Action: Members of Group A and Clerk**

Question

(Mike Bishop): can SACRE give guidance on how schools should handle requests from both students and staff for leave in order to take part in Haj? The Chair will seek advice from Paddy O'Dwyer and report back.

**Action: Chair**

**There were no further matters arising**

**5. Agreed Syllabus Launch**

The Chair thanked SACRE members who have worked hard to complete the Agreed Syllabus, attended the Launch and made this occasion such a happy event. She has received very positive feedback. There were lovely displays from all the faith groups and the atmosphere was very celebratory. The event also provided good opportunities for networking.

The Chair has thanked Paddy O'Dwyer for his support. He is a very committed champion for SACRE.

Lesley Prior added that she had found it a very enjoyable occasion; it was a pleasure to be part of it. The excellent atmosphere embodied what the syllabus should represent.

The event was well attended.

Camilla Bath added that everyone on the committee has contributed by attending meetings and taking part in discussions. It a great pleasure to be a Council representative on SACRE; she has also found committee meetings very informative and enjoys the harmonious atmosphere.

## 6. Monitoring of syllabus and websites – future programme

Lesley Prior reminded the committee that one of SACRE's duties is to monitor RE provision. She has already started work with teachers to create schemes of work based on the Agreed Syllabus. It is important to ensure that the Syllabus is seen and used.

How can SACRE fulfil its obligations to monitor RE? Previously this would have been done through Ofsted reports but these are now in a much reduced format and do not provide enough information for the purpose.

Lesley put forward two suggestions:

- **SEF:** to use the RE SEF form to monitor RE. Schools are not obliged to complete this SEF but SACRE could encourage them to do so. Many schools are reluctant to complete the SEF; this may be due to lack of confidence on the part of non-specialist teachers taking RE.
- **School websites:** some SACREs are monitoring school websites which should contain schemes of work. This is something Harrow SACRE might consider. The committee would write to schools to commend what they are doing well and identify areas where they might need some support and how SACRE could help.

Members discussed these ideas and made some further suggestions:

- **Day of celebration:** organise a day to celebrate good practice; ask teachers to send in examples of RE teaching.
- **Letter to schools:** write to schools reminding them of SACRE's obligations; invite them to make a presentation.
- **Friends of RE forum:** create a forum consisting of a body of people who could visit schools and promote good practice.

Teachers' comments:

Ciara O'Flaherty: schools need to be informed in an authoritative way as well as encouraged as RE can sometimes be put on a back burner.

Teri O'Brien: websites are not always an accurate reflection of what is actually taught. Schools promote themselves through social media such as Twitter. Should SACRE consider setting up a Twitter page?

Mary Abbott: visiting schools to support the RE teacher would be valuable as RE specialists sometimes feel unheard.

The Chair thanked everyone for their comments and suggestions. She and Lesley will take this forward and prepare a letter to go out to schools.

**Action: Chair and Lesley Prior**

## 7. Collective Worship: a future agenda item

Lesley Prior explained that discussion of Collective Worship in schools had been postponed pending a change in the law. However, in the current political climate, such a change seems very unlikely and she has included this item on this evening's agenda in order to review SACRE's role regarding Collective Worship.

SACRE already has some published guidelines for Collective Worship: this would be a good time to refresh the guidelines and perhaps run some courses or training on Collective Worship.

The current emphasis on meditation, mindfulness and stillness could be linked to acts of Collective Worship. Lesley recommended that, at the next meeting, the committee could initiate a process that would help teachers to fulfil legal requirements for Collective Worship and be consistent with the aims of SACRE.

Lesley knows of no initial teacher training courses that cover Collective Worship. Doreen Samuels mentioned one course: the Jewish SCITT at LSJS (London School of Jewish Studies), which focuses on Jewish Collective Acts of Worship.

### **How can SACRE support Collective Worship?**

The Chair commented that there are many good models showing how Collective Worship can be meaningful and keep within the law. The Chair has particular expertise in this area and SACRE can capitalise on this.

### **What exactly is Collective Worship?**

Lesley explained that the law distinguishes between Assemblies and Collective Worship: Collective Worship involves the gathering together of people of different faiths whereas an Assembly is an act of corporate worship by people of one faith. Collective Worship has to meet the needs of people of different cultures and backgrounds.

The law stipulates that an act of Collective Worship should acknowledge a deity and be mainly or broadly Christian in character. There is no specified time allocation but pressures on teaching time will usually mean that it is short. It does not have to be held at any particular time of day.

Members shared some of the practices that they had experienced.

Meeting these requirements could be considered when SACRE reviews the guidelines; the guidelines could also be more widely publicised to schools.

*Item for next agenda  
Guidelines to go out with the agenda*

### **What is SACRE's position on Determinations?**

A determination allows a school to waive the "mainly or broadly Christian" element in Collective Worship. However, it does not remove the requirement itself or the fact that it should include reference to a divine entity. A determination lasts five years. School governors and parents must be consulted before an application is made.

Schools can apply for a determination if the majority of their pupils are not Christian and an act of Collective Worship centred on Christianity would not be appropriate. Faith schools are already exempt from the Collective Worship legislation. Maintained schools apply to their local SACRE; academies should apply to the DfE.

Does SACRE have a list of schools with determinations? There was one but its present whereabouts are uncertain. SACRE also has an application form for schools to use. Use of these forms had fallen into abeyance pending expected changes in the law; now that these changes are very unlikely to happen, it would be appropriate for SACRE to refresh its role as a provider of determinations.

SACREs are often asked under the Freedom of Information Act how many schools have applied for determinations.

Determinations might be a good peg on which to hang the letter discussed under item 6 above. The letter could be tailored for schools with determinations/lapsed determinations/no determinations.

It was agreed to discuss determinations at the next meeting.

*Item for next agenda*

## **8. NASACRE Conference 16<sup>th</sup> May**

Ciara O'Flaherty had attended the conference; she had found it very interesting and informative. The theme of the conference was "Preparing for Life in Britain today: the contribution of RE".

Ciara summarised the content of the keynote speeches; these were given by Dr Joyce Millar, Associate Fellow in the Religions and Education Research Unit at the University of Warwick and Professor Aaqil Ahmed who has a Media background. He has been Head of Religion and Ethics for both the BBC and Channel 4.

Their speeches can be found on the NASACRE website.

<http://www.nasacre.org.uk/conference-and-agm/2017/2017-materials>

Dr Joyce Millar is also one of the commissioners recently appointed by the RE council to review the legal, education and policy frameworks for RE. The Commission will publish

an interim report in the autumn. This report will come to either the September or December meeting of SACRE.

***Item for September or December agenda***

Dr Millar had suggested that SACREs might consider inviting a commissioner to one of their meetings. Members warmed to this idea but felt it would be better to wait until the interim report came out so that it could be used as a basis for discussion. A local commissioner, Dr Anthony Towey might be a suitable person to invite. He is Director of the Aquinas Centre for Theological Literacy at St Mary's University, Twickenham.

Lesley Prior observed that the implications for RE in the future are very different from the present. Technology will play a large part. Conflict is always in the news but we should pay more attention to the positives where different communities work together. Mercedes Afnan added that we should look for solutions and keep positive. Varsha Dodhia recommended a blog called "Here is a Place for Faith in the Public Square". The full blog can be found at [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/daniel-singleton/grenfell\\_b\\_17153918.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/daniel-singleton/grenfell_b_17153918.html)

Varsha has sent the following extract for the minutes:

"We seem to be a society that wants the benefits of faith in the public square but does not want to allow for the very 'faith distinctive', that personal conviction of belief, that motivates people to act and means that faith is often the first to respond and the last to leave..."

The Chair thanked Ciara for her report on the Conference

**9. NASACRE suggestions for this meeting**

- **Membership status 2017/18:** the clerk will make sure that SACRE details are up to date on the NASACRE website and check that the subscription is paid for the coming year.

**Action: Clerk**

*Note: the SACRE invoice has just arrived and sent on to Paddy O'Dwyer for payment.*

- **Big NASACRE Survey:** some members of the committee met to complete the NASACRE survey. It was sent in by the deadline but some late entries are still being submitted. Work has started on analysing the responses. A mixed picture is emerging: some SACREs are in favour of a National RE Curriculum. Others, like Harrow, believe that a National Curriculum would forfeit the rich diversity reflected in the local syllabus. Lesley Prior pointed out that RE Education in the UK is looked on as a model by educationists in other parts of Europe where children are still segregated by religion.
- **A Practice code for teachers of RE (previously circulated):** members noted the Practice Code for Teachers.

**10. Publications**

- **Days of Religious Observance – guidance for schools** see item 4 above.

**11. News from Faith Groups**

- **Mitzvah Day: 19 November.**
- **Board of Deputies Accreditation Day: 5<sup>th</sup> September.** Both Doreen Samuels and Gill Ross have been appointed as accreditors. This committee recognises teachers and volunteers working in schools and communities offering guidance on the practice of the Jewish religion. This recognition has the beneficial side effect of creating a list of people who are willing to visit schools. The contact for more information and for list of accredited personnel is Sara Perlmutter: [sara.perlmutter@bod.org.uk](mailto:sara.perlmutter@bod.org.uk)
- **Sewa Day: 1 October**

- **Musical evening in celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baha'u'llah's birth: 21 October in the Memorial Hall.** SACRE members will be invited.
- **Anne Frank Day: 12<sup>th</sup> June.** This is an opportunity for primary schools to talk about the Holocaust.
- **Interfaith Network National Meeting and AGM: 5 July at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference centre.** Phiroza Gan Kotwal has been appointed to represent Harrow Interfaith. She asked if SACRE members would like her to promote Harrow SACRE. Members felt that this was not necessary at the present time.

**12. Any Other Business**

**There were no items of any other business**

**13. Future Dates:**

**RE Leaders CPD:**

Thursday 14 September 4.30-6 pm at Harrow Arts Centre  
 Thursday 1 February 4.30-6 pm at Harrow Arts Centre  
 Tuesday 1 May 4.30-6.00pm at Harrow Arts Centre

**Future SACRE dates:**

Tues 26 September 2017  
 Tues 5 December 2017  
 Wednesday 7 March 2018: as Lesley Prior cannot make this date: the Clerk will ask Democratic Services if it can be changed to 22 March

**Action: Clerk**

**The Chair thanked everyone for attending. The Meeting closed at 9.15pm**

**Signed:**

**(Chair)**

**(Date)**