

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 10 DECEMBER 2019

Attendance

Group A

A Mercedes Afnan
* Ven Sumana Sramaner
* Bob Dawson
* Diana Ohene
* Ciara O'Flaherty
* Vijay Hirani
* David Cryer
* Varsha Dodhia
* Gill Ross
* Doreen Samuels
~ *Zafar Khalid*
* Asad Omar
~ *Tahir Hashmi*
A Mohammed Amar
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 Central Mosque)
Muslim
Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
Sikh
Zoroastrian

Group B

A Mary Abbott
* Revd Kate Blake
* Revd James Power

Church of England

Group C

* Alison Stowe (Chair)
A Teri-Louise O'Brien
* Fatema Rahemani

Teachers' Associations

Group D

A Cllr Camilla Bath Conservative (Vice Chair)
*Cllr Ghazanfar Ali Labour
A Cllr Angella Murphy-Strachan (Labour)

Local Authority

Cllr Dr Lesline Lewinson Conservative (reserve)
Cllr Simon Brown Labour (reserve)
Vacancy Labour (reserve)

Advisor to the SACRE

* Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

Guest

*Zahra Mamdani (RE Lead at Marlborough School)

Clerk

*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

* *denotes presence*

A denotes absence with apologies

~ *denotes absence without apologies*

1. Welcome

Alison welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Zahra Mamdani, RE Lead from Marlborough School. Zahra has come to speak to the committee about her school's application for a determination. Alison also welcomed Diana Ohene who has been nominated as a replacement for Carolyn O'Brien.

2. Apologies for absence

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Mercedes Afnan, Mohammed Amar, Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Mary Abbott, Teri-Louise O'Brien, Cllr Camilla Bath and Cllr Angella Murphy-Strachan.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Zafar Khalid, Tahir Hashmi.

No apologies had been received.

3. Order of the Agenda

It was agreed to move item 8: Determinations to follow item 5: Matters arising; this would enable Zahra to leave after this item.

4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 15 October 2019 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. Determinations:

Marlborough school

Alison introduced Zahra. Alison explained that she has sent many emails to Marlborough to chase up their application for a determination, only to find that these emails were not reaching their destination as the Headteacher had been replaced by an acting Head. Once contact was established, she was put in touch with Zahra who had collated all the paperwork for the application. As this was only submitted yesterday, the committee had not had time to review the paperwork thoroughly; this would need to be done at a later stage but this evening they would listen to Zahra and have a chance to ask her questions.

Questions and comments

Songs: Alison was pleased to see that the songs included in the paperwork are appropriate for a school that is seeking a determination; they have been chosen with thought for the diversity of the school community.

Collective Worship policy: Alison commented that at Norbury Primary, the Collective Worship Policy is linked to the school's aims and objectives; at Marlborough it is linked to the school values. Zahra confirmed this; it is also linked to the PHSE curriculum; Zahra also explained that the assembly schedule is linked to the songs.

Power Points: Zahra has included examples of Power Points.

Reflections: Zahra explained that reflections take place at the end of assemblies. Not all classes have assemblies every day but the classes that do not have an assembly have an act of worship in their classroom.

Is there a form of words for the reflections? Zahra confirmed that teachers use a form of words beginning, "Now we will reflect on ...". Reflection time sometimes takes place after a discussion; sometimes it is followed by a plenary session where reflections are fed back into the group.

Is there a class assembly book where a record is kept of the reflections? Zahra explained that the school does not have a Collective Worship Book but the themes of Collective Worship are recorded in the PHSE book or linked to other subjects.

Vijay commented that some of the reflections are very subjective. Zahra explained that there is a different theme for every week and links are made to other subjects: for instance, the theme of friendship is linked to the PHSE syllabus. Reflections can also be linked to class learning.

Governor consultation: it is important that governors agree to the school's application for a determination: Marlborough has consulted its governors who were unanimous in supporting the school's application for a determination.

Parental consultation: It is also important that parents and carers understand the nature of a determination. Marlborough has held a parents' meeting to explain their reasons for seeking a determination and parents have completed a questionnaire.

What sort of concerns were raised by parents? How did the school respond to a parent who expressed the hope that the school "would not take Christ out of Christmas"? Zahra explained that the school had held a meeting with this parent to explain the differences between RE and Collective Worship: the school will not be putting beliefs into children's heads nor will it devalue faith in any religion.

On the whole, parents were supportive of the school's application for a determination and any concerns were addressed by the school.

Withdrawal from Collective Worship: are any children at Marlborough withdrawn from the school's collective worship. Zahra confirmed that no children are withdrawn.

School Website: will there be information on the school website? Zahra confirmed that the website will be updated: at the moment the upkeep of the website is in transition.

Links between Collective Worship and RE: are links made between Collective Worship and RE. Zahra explained that the school makes links between reflections and RE. There is more emphasis on reflection in Collective Worship.

Agreed syllabus: does the school follow the locally agreed syllabus? Zahra confirmed that the school follows the locally agreed syllabus.

Pupil Voice: James commented that some of the "Pupil Voice" comments are well worth looking at.

Alison thanked Zahra for her attendance this evening: she explained that SACRE could not make an immediate decision as the committee still has to read and digest the supporting documentation. Some SACRE members have visited the school. Varsha pointed out that the Marlborough "flower of faiths" symbol needs two extra petals to represent Zoroastrianism and Humanism. Zahra assured her that these will be added.

Zahra left the meeting at 7.55pm

Committee discussion

Links to PHSE: some members of the committee felt that the Collective Worship was too similar to PHSE although Zahra's replies indicated a well thought out approach to Collective Worship. Collective Worship has a religious basis – it cannot be equated with PHSE.

Visits to the school: Alison has visited the school: she felt that the school was in a time of transition with many changes in the senior leadership. This has resulted in her emails not reaching their destination and the protracted nature of this application.

Support for the school: Alison felt sympathy for Zahra who is new to her responsibility as RE Lead.

Lesley agreed and confirmed that RE leaders are required to take on the demanding task of organizing Collective Worship. There is very little training for this.

Alison has supported the school by phone and Glebe has also offered support: this offer has not been taken up.

Supporting documentation: Lesley was very clear that SACRE could not make an informed decision before members had had a chance to review the paperwork. While wanting to be supportive of the school's process, SACRE must also be rigorous.

Lesley proposed deferring a decision until the next meeting in March. This was agreed.

Meanwhile, Alison will convene a Chairs group to review the documentation and prepare recommendations for the Committee.

Action: Alison Stowe

Chairs group:

Group A: Gill Ross

Group B: James Power

Group C: Alison Stowe and Fatema Rahemani

Group D: Ghazanfar Ali was the only group D representative present this evening: he will discuss with other members.

Action: Ghazanfar Ali

Alison will write to the school, thanking Zahra for her attendance and explaining that the committee will review the paperwork and make a decision at its next meeting on 24 March 2020.

Action: Alison Stowe

SACRE Guidance on determinations

Advising on RE and Collective Worship is the statutory responsibility of SACRE.

Lesley suggested that SACRE should consider, as a future piece of work, compiling guidance on the process of applying for a determination and clarification of what a determination actually is.

She explained that the determination does not relieve the school of its responsibility to hold a daily act of worship: a determination only allows the school to remove the "broadly or wholly Christian" element required by the 1988 Education Act. While an assembly is not a legal requirement, Collective Worship is required by law.

Lesley is advisor to some other authorities: they send SACRE members to witness Collective Worship and talk to staff. Some teachers are very ill-prepared to deliver a daily act of worship.

Lesley proposed that a Chairs' Group/Steering group should review existing guidance, best practice in Harrow and other relevant publications: from this research they should compile some guidance for schools accompanied by appropriate training.

This was agreed

Government guidance on Collective Worship: government guidance on Collective Worship dates from 1994. An act of Collective Worship should involve reverence and veneration to a Divine Being or Power. As mentioned above, it should be "broadly or wholly Christian in character" but this can mean different things to different people. Lesley thinks of it as being like a Radio 4 "Thought for the Day" for children.

"Collective" is different from "Corporate". "Collective" means that the people gathered together do not necessarily share the same belief system whereas "corporate" implies a group of people with a common belief system. A Collective Act of worship may include prayers from specific religions. Children can be invited to reflect as individuals but an individual act of worship cannot be a Collective Act of worship.

Some schools offer prayer rooms. These are usually multi-faith prayer spaces where individuals can pray according to their own tradition. This is not Collective Worship and it is not required by law.

Collective Acts of Worship can build a sense of community and celebrate the values of the school.

7. Monitoring of syllabus and websites: website reviews in the light of new Ofsted Inspections

Lesley informed the committee that the WhatsApp group of primary RE Leads was generating discussion about how the new RE curriculum is implemented. There seems to be some misunderstanding about time requirements and which religions should be covered. These misunderstandings will be addressed at the next Subject Leaders meeting. There is still a lack in the depth of understanding needed to implement the curriculum. Changes of personnel mean that teachers are unfamiliar with the content of the curriculum. However, they are in touch with each other and provide mutual support.

Question: how is the "big question" overview being addressed? Lesley explained that this is being followed but RE teachers have questions about how to do this and how to gain the depth of knowledge required. They also have questions about the time requirements.

All religions represented in Harrow should be taught. Collective Worship should be every day for every pupil.

Question: what counts as RE time? For instance, would taking a group to visit a place of worship count as RE? Lesley explained that this would depend on the orientation of the visit.

Schools are not always clear that Collective Worship does not count as time spent on RE. The law does not stipulate how long the Act of Collective Worship should be.

Lesley advised members to keep on monitoring websites to see how the RE syllabus is represented.

8. News from NASACRE

AGM and Conference

Lesley reported that the NASACRE AGM and day conference for 2020 will be held on **Monday 18 May at the Crown Plaza Hotel in the city of London.**

The theme is Authority in RE.

Harrow traditionally sends one or two people to the conference. The cost is £110 per person.

One of the Keynote speakers will be a senior officer from Ofsted; the other is likely to be Professor Denise Cush formerly of the University of Bath Spa.

As it is on a weekday this year, Alison may be able to go. Members were asked to think about who else might be interested.

The 2021 conference will take place in Manchester or Birmingham.

NASACRE Executive

There are vacancies on the NASACRE executive. Lesley is currently a member and would be willing to continue. Members of the committee would be delighted to nominate her when the papers come round. Alison could not stress too strongly how helpful it is for the committee to have an advisor who is a member of the NASACRE executive.

Ofsted

NASACRE is also taking an interest in Ofsted reports and how Ofsted are inspecting RE in the light of the broader curriculum. Is RE the subject of the “deep dives” advocated by Ofsted? Are there as many “deep dives” for RE as there are for other humanities subjects? Findings show that there are more deep dives in the primary than the secondary sector. Research has not yet been concluded as to whether there are as many deep dives for RE as for the other humanities subjects.

Ofsted have put out advertisements for lead inspectors in certain subjects including RE. It is not known as yet who has been appointed. NASACRE will be viewing summary subject reports.

Question: what expertise can be found in the DfE for their oversight of RE in academies and free schools? This is a good question. SACRES only have oversight of LA maintained schools. Academy chains do not have to provide a report on RE. However, if Ofsted has a renewed focus on RE, then it will be inspected but it is not known whether inspectors have sufficient knowledge to do this adequately.

SACREs should be encouraged to produce a 2-side briefing to give guidance to inspectors on their locally agreed syllabus.

Alison and Lesley will arrange a meeting to discuss this.

Acton: Alison Stowe and Lesley Prior

9. Annual report 2018-19 (Chair's foreword previously circulated)

The Annual report is nearly complete. Alison has circulated her foreword to the report for members' comments.

In her report, Alison thanked members for their time and commitment. She also stressed the importance of having a local advisor. Harrow is also lucky in having a stalwart supporter in Patrick O'Dwyer. It is very important that there should be money for training. Sometimes RE leaders are prevented from attending the RE Leaders meeting because their school cannot afford cover for them.

Members approved the report. One member suggested respectfully that perhaps this tribute to Pat Stevens took up too much of the report. Alison will consider this. Patrick has emailed to say that he has the examination information for the report. Alison will send her part of the report to him and he will collate the whole and send it to NASACRE and circulate to the other usual recipients.

Action: Alison Stowe and Patrick O'Dwyer

10. Collective Worship Working Group

The work of the Collective Worship Working Group continues. Alison will be speaking to the RE leaders meeting in June.

11. Report on Current Legal Arrangements for RE in Schools

There is not much to say regarding this item: it is really to alert members to the link to this document which is part of the Parliamentary Library. It provides a useful summary of the law on Collective Worship and RE. It has been updated to reference academies and free schools.

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7167>

12. LGBT and Education

This item should have been taken off the agenda: there was nothing to add from last time. NASACRE's advice is that this is not part of SACRE's remit.

13. SRE

As for item 12. above.

14. News from Faith Groups

- **Jewish Community**

Doreen reported that the future of Moriah School is in doubt. Doreen and Gill will keep SACRE informed if there are any developments.

- **Harrow Interfaith**

Varsha reported that Harrow Interfaith have planted 1000 trees in Kenton Rec as part of the Planting for Peace programme. More trees are being planted to commemorate Gandhi's 150th anniversary.

- **Humanists**

David reported that the Humanist Association have a resources website for assemblies. It is called Assemblies for all.

<https://humanism.org.uk/education/assemblies-for-all/>

David has also contributed to the Primary RE Network Meeting this term and shared Humanist resources. This was very well received.

15. Any Other Business

- **Reception in Buckingham Palace**

Gill and Doreen attended a Reception hosted by HRH Prince Charles to celebrate the Jewish community in Britain. Gill and Doreen were chosen to represent Harrow SACRE.

- **Prayer Space in Belmont School**

A prayer space has been opened at Belmont School. Alison suggested that she should invite a teacher from the school to talk about how it is used.

This was agreed.

Action: Alison Stowe

- **Hujjat School:** a new school is opening in the autumn of 2020 on the site of the campus of Harrow College. . It will be following the Agreed syllabus. The consultation letter was sent round to SACRE members on 9 November.
- **Hanukkah!** Doreen passed round chocolate money, a typical Hanukkah gift.

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

16. Future Dates:

The next meeting is on Tuesday 24 March

Some alternative suggestions were made to the proposed dates sent from the Civic Centre:

- Wednesday 24 June 2020 - proposed alternative: **Thursday 25 June**
- Wednesday 30 September 2020 - proposed alternative: **Tuesday 29 September**
- Tuesday 8 December 2020 - proposed alternative: **Thursday 10 December**
- Wednesday 10 March 2021 - proposed alternative: **Tuesday 9 March**

Vivian will circulate the revised list and ask committee members to advise her of any potential problems with these dates.

Action: Vivian Wright

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.00pm pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)