

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL OR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING ON
9 MARCH 2021

Attendance

Group A

A Mercedes Afnan
~ *Ven Sumana Sramaner*
* Bob Dawson
* Diana Ohene
* Ciara O'Flaherty
* Vijay Hirani
* David Cryer
* Varsha Dodhia
* Gill Ross
A Doreen Samuels
~ *Zafar Khalid*
* Asad Omar
~ *Tahir Hashmi*
~ *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

* Mary Abbott
A Revd Kate Blake
* Revd James Power

Church of England

Group C

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

Teachers' Associations

Group D

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

Local Authority

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

Advisor to the SACRE

* Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

Clerk

*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

Visitor

Becky Frost from RE:GEN (from 7.40 to 8.00pm)

* denotes presence

A denotes absence with apologies

~ denotes absence without apologies

1. Welcome

Alison welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Mercedes Afnan, Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Doreen Samuels, Revd Kate Blake, Cllr Ghazanfar Ali, Cllr Angella Murphy-Strachan and Cllr Simon Brown.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Ven Sumaner Sramaner, Zafar Khalid, Tahir Hashmi, Mohamed Amar and Teri- Louise O'Brien.

No apologies had been received.

Membership: Revd Kate Blake has resigned from the committee.

Alison will check if Teri-Louise O'Brien is still a member of this committee since she gave up her special responsibility as RE Lead at Norbury.

Action: Alison

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 10 December 2020 (previously circulated)

p. 2. Item 7. Local and National Updates:

Last line: Diana Ohene pointed out that she carries out Equalities training for schools but not the training towards Family School Quality Awards which is also available for schools.

With this amendment, the minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

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

Becky Frost from RE:GEN joined the meeting at 7.40pm

5. RE:GEN presentation

Alison introduced Becky Frost from RE:GEN, an organization which visits schools within the LA with resources on Christianity. RE leaders often ask questions relating to Christianity. Harrow SACRE has asked RE:GEN to talk through one of the "big questions" relating to Christianity on the Agreed Syllabus:

What can Christians learn from the teachings of Jesus? This is a topic for Year 1 (5-6 year olds) taught in summer 1.

What did Jesus say:

- Love the Lord your God (greatest commandment);
- Love your neighbour as yourself (golden rule).

Outcomes would be to know and understand Jesus' teaching of the Golden Rule and how this impacts on the way in which Christians behave towards others.

Stories to use:

- Good Samaritan;
- Zacchaeus;
- Feeding of the 5000;
- The Unforgiving Servant;
- The Rich Fool.

The parables (Good Samaritan, Unforgiving Servant and Rich Fool) could provide links to literacy and stories.

Christians believe that Jesus wants us to love people: values of Love, Kindness, Being Helpful, Forgiveness and Sharing.

Questions and comments:

Q. What advice would Becky give to teachers teaching these key messages? Becky would advise teachers to discuss kindness and helpfulness in the context of the school rules and practical examples.

Q. Would Becky read the story? Becky explained that there are many fantastic resources that tell the stories in a child friendly way.

Comment: it would be important to stress that these values are common to all faiths and none. They can be taught through assemblies, PHSE and history as well as RE.

Q. Can children bring their own values to the discussion? In many Harrow classrooms the majority of children would be from other faiths. Becky explained that these values can be discussed in the context of other faiths and used as an opportunity for inclusion.

Comments: schools in Harrow also include children from a variety of Christian traditions, for example the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Christian values are not exclusive to Christianity or even to other religions. It may be necessary to establish the story before digging into its meaning.

SACRE would advise avoiding "we" language, e.g. say "Christians believe this" rather than "we believe this."

The RE subject leaders give very positive feedback about the good work RE:GEN carries out in schools. Their work is valued.

Alison explained that Harrow SACRE had hoped to invite a teacher from Belmont to talk about how RE and how RE:GEN resources are used in an interactive way. Lockdown had prevented this.

Bob observed that these resources offered teachers and pupils an opportunity to stand back from school life and reflect on their values.

Lesley observed that at a subject leaders meeting held at Aylward school, there was great interest in the space for reflection: teachers were inspired by what they

saw. Alison felt that prayer spaces will be even more important as children return to school after such a difficult year.

Mary thanked Becky for planning her next unit of work for the summer term! She will report back to SACRE on how it goes.

Becky left the meeting at 8.00pm.

Bob added that RE:GEN also produce resources on Mental Health and Wellbeing. Varsha works for a Mental Health Trust: she can provide resources that they have produced.

6. Local and National updates

National

Lesley introduced this item. She explained that the next NASACRE Briefing will be out soon but she can offer members a preview:

Annual reports: NASACRE is working with the DfE to produce a shared template for SACRE Annual reports. This will enable local SACREs to share successes but also to identify areas of difficulty.

Collective Worship: NASACRE is working on guidance for Collective Worship. Lesley is involved in the area that covers the process of applying for a determination.

AGM 24 May: as this will be held online, up to 4 delegates from each SACRE may attend for a *total* cost of £60.

Q. How is this funded? Alison replied that she approaches Paddy O'Dwyer.

Interested members should contact Alison as soon as possible.

Action: Members

There are two interesting Keynote speakers:

Dr Richard Kueh, the newly appointed Subject Lead in RE for Ofsted and Professor Denise Cush, Professor of Religion and Education at Bath Spa University, who is a well-known proponent of the dharmic faiths.

Full details and registration forms will be issued shortly.

Membership of SACREs: NASACRE is also reviewing recruitment to SACREs. This is not a problem for Harrow where support is strong and the four major faiths are well represented. However, all SACREs need to ensure that members are approved and appointed through the appropriate channels. It would be helpful to know which nominating bodies are represented by SACRE members and all SACREs need to be sure that they are following correct recruitment procedures.

Hinduism: Insight UK has published a research paper based on a survey of Hindu parents about their experience of how Hinduism is taught in their children's schools.

Its chief findings were:

- 97% of survey respondents say it is important and paramount for their child to learn about Hinduism.
- 98% of survey respondents say the study of Hinduism in RE is low quality and deficient.
- 75% of respondents feel that Hinduism is not taught in a positive light.
- 86% of the respondents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the teaching of Hinduism in schools within the United Kingdom. 76% of primary school parents are unhappy about RE teachers' knowledge of Hinduism.
- 81% of Key Stage 3 and 87% of Key Stage 4 parents are discontented about RE teachers' knowledge of Hinduism.
- There is growing evidence of inaccurate resources used by classroom teachers for teaching Hinduism.
- Hindu parents and pupils feel they do not have a choice to study Hinduism at GCSE level.

The full report can be read here:

https://insightuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Hinduism-in-RE_Project-report.pdf

Lesley made the point that this reflects the national picture; it may not be the case in Harrow. The Hindu Education Board works with NASACRE to ensure appropriate representation on SACREs and (when possible) fosters school visits to places of Hindu worship and Hindu visitors to schools. It also generates resources on Hinduism.

Lesley has found that on another SACRE she advises, this report has stimulated members of other faith groups to lobby their national bodies to carry out similar surveys.

Lesley has some reservations about the research and made the following points:

- Parents may not understand the role of RE in a community school: the schools are not responsible for fostering children's faith.
- Regarding the last point: schools have to choose two faiths to study: most choose Christianity and either Judaism or Islam. (Whitmore is unique in offering students a choice).
- SACREs only have a remit for community schools. Academies and private schools are independent of SACREs.

Lesley will share the report with RE subject leaders and will provide a link to the report in the newsletter she sends to schools. According to the last census, Hinduism is the third largest religion in this country: this may change when the results of this year's Census are published.

Varsha has been involved in this discussion: she reported that Hindus are lobbying for Hindu free schools. Hindu parents often organize extracurricular classes where children can study Hinduism for GCSE. However, some parents

feel that Hinduism should be taught as a mainstream subject rather than a supplementary subject outside the school curriculum. It is also important that children who are not Hindu should learn about Hinduism.

Lesley pointed out that Hinduism is a required subject at each Key Stage in Harrow community schools. At the last meeting, the death of Jay Lakhani was reported: Jay was a great advocate for the study of Hinduism; it is hoped that his work will continue.

Vijay drew members' attention to Hindu resources that are available; he pointed out that there are a number of misconceptions about Hinduism and gaps in Hindu education. Lesley felt that Harrow SACRE is lucky to have Vijay on the committee. Faith representatives are vital links between schools and faith organizations. The teaching of Hinduism in Harrow is likely to be better than in many parts of the country. Vijay confirmed that Harrow has good quality resources on Hinduism.

Q. Can SACRE obtain feedback on what is happening in Harrow schools? Lesley replied that informal feedback is provided by the subject leaders group. They are very active and promote RE through their Newsletter, WhatsApp group and regular meetings. They developed RE resources throughout the lockdown so RE is likely to emerge with stronger materials of excellent quality.

Lesley pointed out that when the time comes to review the Agreed Syllabus, schools will have to be consulted in more detail. RE is stronger in Harrow than in some other places and the teachers are very dedicated.

8. Collective Worship Policy

This item was deferred pending the publication of guidance from NASACRE. **Meanwhile, Members should read the Collective Worship document that has already been circulated and send comments to Alison by the end of March.**

Action: Members

9. Determinations:

Vaughan School

Owing to the repeated closures of schools over the past year, Vaughan has still not quite completed its application for a determination. However, they should be in a position to present their application at the next meeting.

Item for next agenda

10. Priorities for the Year ahead

- **Collective Worship Policy:** *see 8 above.*
- **Supporting Vaughan in its determination:** *see 9 above.*
- **Reviewing the Agreed Syllabus:** Alison and Lesley are meeting next week to discuss the Agreed Syllabus. They will consider the work being

done by teachers and agree a shared format so that this can be set alongside the syllabus. Teachers, who are often not subject specialists, really need detailed lesson plans – a ready meal rather than a list of ingredients!

Q. Can holes be identified? Alison explained that teachers are quick to contact her if there are holes. There is a detailed ongoing plan to look through the schemes of learning to identify where there is need for extra training. RE will be subject to more informed inspections following the appointment of Richard Kueh (*See also 6. AGM above*). 50% of his time will be devoted to RE and there will be as stronger emphasis on individual subjects. Ofsted inspectors will receive improved training on RE.

11. News from Faith Groups relating to schools

There was no news from faith groups.

12. Any Other Business

- **Vaccination uptake:** Varsha reported that Harrow Interfaith have produced a video to promote vaccinations.
- **World Views in RE:** Alison recommended an online talk by Professor Trevor Cooling. This is of particular relevance in the context of reviewing the RE syllabus.
- **Women and climate change:** Varsha informed members that Religions for Peace is creating momentum around this issue. The climate crisis, as Lesley pointed out, is, like the Black Lives Matter movement, one of the important issues that have come to the fore in recent years and which will have implications for the new RE syllabus.
- **RE and the 2021 Census:** members discussed the difficulties of accurately reflecting religious affiliations in the Census.

14. Future Dates:

- Tuesday 29 June: this will be held on Zoom: Vivian will inform the Civic centre and members who are not present tonight. She will also ensure that the agenda is on the website with contact details so that members of the public can apply to attend the meeting, should they wish.

Action: Vivian

- Tuesday 28 September
- Thursday 2 December
- Tuesday 8 March 2022

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)