

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING ON
29 JUNE 2021

Attendance

Group A

Religious traditions and Christian churches

* Mercedes Afnan	Baha'i
* Ven Sumana Sramaner	Buddhist
<i>A Bob Dawson</i>	Christian (Free Church Federal Council)
* Diana Ohene	Christian (Catholic)
~ <i>Ciara O'Flaherty</i>	Christian (Catholic)
~ <i>Vijay Hirani</i>	Hindu (Swaminarayan)
* David Cryer	Humanist (Harrow Humanists)
* Varsha Dodhia	Jain
<i>A Gill Ross</i>	Jewish
* Doreen Samuels	Jewish
~ <i>Zafar Khalid</i>	Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
<i>A Asad Omar</i>	Muslim
~ <i>Tahir Hashmi</i>	Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
* Mohammed Amar	Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
~ <i>Paramjit Singh-Kohli</i>	Sikh
* Phiroza Gan-Kotwal	Zoroastrian

Group B

Church of England

- * Mary Abbott
- * Alison Stowe
- * Revd James Power

Group C

Teachers' Associations

- * Fatema Rahemani

Group D

Local Authority

- * Cllr Camilla Bath Conservative (Vice Chair)
- * Cllr Christine Robson Labour
- * Cllr Angella Murphy-Strachan Labour

Cllr Dr Lesline Lewinson Conservative (reserve)

Cllr Simon Brown Labour (reserve)

Cllr Sasi Suresh Labour (reserve)

Advisor to the SACRE

- * Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

Clerk

*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

Visitor

Lucian Oprea (*joined at the end of the meeting*)

* denotes presence

A denotes absence with apologies

~ denotes absence without apologies

1. Welcome

Alison welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Cllr Christine Robson who replaces Cllr Ghazanfar Ali. Ghazanfar Ali is now Mayor of Harrow. Alison will send a card on behalf of SACRE.

Action: Alison

2. Apologies for absence

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Bob Dawson, Gill Ross, and Asad Omar.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Ciara O'Flaherty, Vijay Hirani, Zafar Khalid, Tahir Hashmi and Paramjit Singh-Kohli.

No apologies had been received.

Membership: Alison Stowe has moved from Group C to Group B.

Teri-Louise O'Brien has moved away from Harrow and is no longer a member of this committee.

3. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Vivian took the chair for this part of the meeting:

Chair: Alison Stowe was nominated by Mary Abbott and seconded by Phiroza Gan-Kotwal. Alison is willing to stand again.

Alison Stowe was elected unanimously as Chair to Harrow SACRE for 2021-22.

Alison then resumed chairing the meeting.

Vice-Chair: Camilla Bath was nominated by Varsha Dodia, seconded by David Cryer.

Camilla is willing to stand again.

Camilla Bath was elected unanimously as Vice-Chair to Harrow SACRE for 2021-22.

4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 9 March 2021 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

p. 2. Item 2. Apologies for absence

Membership: Teri-Louise O'Brien's continuing membership of this committee: *see 2 above.*

pp.2-3. Re:gen Presentation: Alison has written to thank Becky Frost for her presentation. Mary added that she has used the Re:gen resources very successfully.

pp.3-4. Item 6. Local and National Updates

National: Hinduism:

Varsha asked whether, in the light of the research paper on Hinduism from Insight UK and in view of the rising Hindu population in Harrow, SACRE should be responding in some way for example, by developing more resources.

Alison and Lesley will discuss this with local RE teachers. Many resources for Hinduism are currently being developed; Harrow has a number of good local speakers who can bring Hinduism to life.

James asked if SACRE has funds for resources. Alison explained that each school has a folder of RE resources provided by SACRE but this has not been refreshed for some time and they will need updating.

SACRE has no designated funding for resources but each school has a curriculum budget although this is often very small.

Harrow School Library service provide resource boxes but schools have to buy into this service. Phiroza recalled compiling folders and resource boxes when Pat Stevens was advisor to SACRE. These were available from the Teachers' Centre Library. What happened to these? Alison explained that they had been distributed to schools.

The Jewish Museum also has boxes of resources and artefacts to lend to schools.

Lesley was unaware of the School Library Service provision and also of the folders which were compiled before she became advisor to Harrow SACRE. These resources have not been mentioned at Network meetings so it may be that teachers are unaware of them too. She will link up with the School Library Service to find out about this.

Lesley informed members that Brent Museum Service is supplementing its resource boxes with local input, e.g. short videos of local faith communities. Harrow might learn from this initiative.

Lesley is aware of the Jewish Museum resources: they have been mentioned in the schools newsletter previously.

p.5. Item 8. Collective Worship: *see 9. below.*

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

6. RE and Ofsted

Lesley introduced this item. She explained that Ofsted used to have designated subject specialists but this practice was discontinued. However, last year subject specialists were appointed and will be active when Ofsted resumes regular inspections.

Dr Richard Kueh is the lead RE inspector at Ofsted. He is largely responsible for the research paper issued on 12 May under the auspices of Ofsted. He has also created short video clips available on the Ofsted website.

The key points of the research paper are:

- National context in relation to RE and to what extent is this a true reflection of what is happening in schools;
- Challenges faced by RE: insufficient time and resources and lack of subject knowledge;
- Importance of curriculum progression in RE;
- Ways in which RE is taught and the importance of assessment;
- Impact of school leaders' input and support;
- RE flourishes if it is taken seriously by school leaders and given its proper place in the curriculum.

Richard identifies three types of knowledge:

- Facts learnt about religions;
- Learning how to know about religion and world views by discussion and discernment.
- Self-knowledge: pupils' own beliefs and ethical codes.

The research paper provides pointers as what high quality RE looks like and emphasizes that learning should be based on sound academic scholarship.

Richard makes clear links between context and concept. He is keen for other inspectors to be properly trained.

RE may be a specific focus in future inspections and will be assessed by knowledgeable inspectors.

Lesley has worked on getting this message across to schools. She stressed that the report will be very pertinent when Harrow SACRE comes to revise the Agreed Syllabus. Ofsted will be publishing other research papers: these will be important for SACREs and for schools.

Questions and comments:

David thanked Lesley for her very clear summary.

James commented that it is a very interesting research paper as it brings together previous work on the subject. It is the most helpful document he has read recently.

Phiroza asked if Harrow SACRE receives CSSB (Central School Services Block) funding mentioned in the report. Alison replied that Harrow SACRE is very fortunate in having the support of Paddy O'Dwyer. It is generously funded compared with many SACREs and is able to employ a paid advisor and clerk.

Varsha commented that Harrow is a very diverse borough. Can SACRE support community cohesion?

Alison explained that Harrow is fortunate in its Agreed Syllabus and that RE leaders take representation very seriously. Lesley corroborated this.

The report emphasizes the importance of accurate knowledge: this is often the way to dispel prejudice and stereotyping. RE is not a complete panacea but can make a big difference. Moving resources online can prove very helpful.

SACRE also exemplifies community cohesion. During the pandemic, RE leaders focused on updating the curriculum and this will place RE in a strong position as schools return to the normal curriculum. Teachers had time to focus on their RE responsibilities and building resources. Lesley paid tribute to the commitment and enthusiasm of RE leaders in the borough. She also praised the commitment of SACRE members who contribute to the RE network: this is greatly appreciated.

Mercedes commented on how communities have shared food and other resources with others from different groups. It would be good if this leap forward in community cohesion could be brought to schools: how can it be brought into schools in a way that they can reflect upon and show what has been learnt?

Angella praised the extent and depth of RE teaching in Harrow's primary schools. She felt, however, that in secondary schools, RE is one of the humanities group of subjects and may not be taught in the same depth. Secondary schools are results driven. There is only one state secondary school in Harrow.

Sumaner is the RE lead at this school and he outlined RE provision at Whitmore. There are 4 RE teachers and RE is taught throughout the school. It is taken as a GCSE subject where a unique feature is that students can choose which two world faiths to study from 6 religions. At other schools, this choice is made for them. Students enjoy studying RE and can choose to study it at A level too. Angella felt this was wonderful to hear and useful to know. Lesley commented that in her experience Whitmore is unique in its range and richness of provision. RE has the support of the senior leaders in the school and enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers.

However, as Christine pointed out, this is the only state secondary school in Harrow. The others are all academies where SACRE has no influence or input.

7. Reflections from AGM

David gave his reflections on the conference. The theme was "Authority in RE" and different aspects of this theme were explored in speeches, workshops and discussions.

The second keynote speaker was Denise Cush, Professor of Religion and Education at Bath Spa University and holder of an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Uppsala in Sweden. Her speech explored different ideas of authority in religion:

<https://nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-750-denise-cush-nasacre-authority-in-rs-wvs-and-re.pdf>.

David and Camilla also participated in the elections to vote three new members to the committee.

David had also attended a discussion led Professor Trevor Cooling, Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Canterbury. This explored developing world views in the context of RE.

Camilla described her experience as being fragmented. Technical problems caused her to be locked out of some events she wanted to attend and she found herself locked in to a discussion with other delegates from the Midlands whose concerns and experiences were rather different from hers. They were not receptive to her contributions and overall she had found it a frustrating experience.

David confirmed the problems with the break out rooms. Lesley apologized on behalf of NASACRE for these technical problems: although the organisers had tried to set up the breakout rooms in advance, some delegates tried to join them using a different email ID and this had caused problems.

Alison asked Camila and David to send any additional reflections to Vivian to include in the minutes.

Diana had checked the chat box. She belongs to a group of leaders for racial equalities where fourteen authors have published their own stories. She wondered if this could also be a fruitful source of RE resources, if, for instance, members were to share their own religious journeys and experiences.

Doreen is Chair of governors at a faith school in Redbridge. It is very diverse and inclusive. During the lockdown, pupils and staff participated in a project called "Hear My Voice", sharing their own stories. The results were outstanding.

Lesley will contact the RE advisor in Redbridge and gather details.

Action: Lesley

8. Local and National updates

- **Network meetings:** dates are in place for the coming year and the network newsletter continues to be published twice a term. This is also sent to members. The network could be a source of future teacher representatives to fill the current vacancies caused by Teri-Louise's departure and Alison's move to group 2. Candidates could then be recruited via the appropriate channels.
- **London Climate Action week (26 June – 4 July):** Varsha reported that this is London Climate action week. This included a special day for schools. <https://sdg.iisd.org/events/london-climate-action-week-2021/>

Some more links from Varsha:

- COVID 19 Vaccination: Harrow Together - different faith groups contribution <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4i5YIHspcE>
- London Climate Action Week Schools seminars 29 June: http://www.londonsustainableschools.org/uploads/1/5/7/4/15747734/lcaw_schools_climate_summit_brochure.pdf programme attached.
- London Climate Change Action Week: Interfaith Service Sun 27 June: <https://youtu.be/Np08uqSWiok>

- **Thankyou Day:** Doreen reported that this Sunday (July 4th) is Thank you day organised by Churches together. <https://ctbi.org.uk/thank-you-day-sunday-4-july-2021>

9. Collective Worship Policy

No comments have been received on the draft Collective Worship Policy. Alison and Lesley will take this forward and ensure it is posted on the website and made available to schools.

Action: Alison and Lesley

10. Determinations:

Vaughan School

Schools have been under tremendous pressure over the past year and Vaughan's determination still needs a little more work before being submitted to the committee.

Alison will follow this up with the head teacher at Vaughan. She stressed that the supporting papers must be received in good time so that members could read them beforehand.

Action: Alison
Item for next agenda

11. Priorities for the Year ahead

- **Collective Worship Policy:** *see 9 above.*
- **Supporting Vaughan in its determination:** *see 10 above.*
- **Reviewing the Agreed Syllabus.**
- **Developing Resources:** *see 5 above.*
- **Survey:** Diana suggested a survey along the lines of the "How are you" survey produced by the Harrow Foundation. This could be a way of gathering the views of young people and also adults which could provide data for the AS review. Christine added that the results of this local survey for young people will be shared on 08 July 2021 03:45pm - 05:00pm
<https://youngharrowfoundation.org/howareyouharrowsschoolpage>

12. News from Faith Groups relating to schools

- **Judaism:** Doreen was pleased to report that the Gersher school which has taken over the Moriah school site will be a special school specialising in ASD and taking pupils from 4 to 18.
- **Norbury School:** David reported that Norbury are holding a remembrance service on 16 July for members of the school community who died from Covid.

13. Any Other Business

- **SRE Curriculum:** Doreen reminded members that the new SRE curriculum is being implemented from September: she envisages this causing distress among some parents of faith. Can SACRE produce resources for parents who seem to have been neglected in this?

Alison explained that schools are running consultations for parents. Lesley added that although this is an important point it is outside the remit of SACRE. SACRE does look at areas of interface between faith and other areas of life and many faith communities have produced guidance.

This was mentioned at the Harrow SACRE meeting of 15 October 2019 when aspects of the SRE curriculum relating to LGBT were discussed. At that time it was concluded then that this is not part of SACRE's remit; this conclusion remains the same.

As mentioned at that meeting, a number of religious bodies have produced guidance:

- The Jewish Board of Deputies:
<https://chiefrabbi.org/lgbtwelfare/>
- The Baha'i community: <http://re.bahai.org.uk/>
- The Church of England:
https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Valuing%20All%20God%27s%20Children%20July%202019_0.pdf
- The Catholic Church:
<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/education/other-topics/serving-lgbt-students-in-catholic-schools.html>

and

- The DfE has produced a number of advisory documents:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

If members are aware of other resources produced by their faith communities, they should send links to Vivian. SACRE could be the broker for this guidance.

- **Visitor** Lucian Oprea was welcomed to the meeting. Alison apologised for the difficulties encountered in joining the meeting.
- New email address: Alison's Igfl account is no longer valid. Her new email addresses are: alison.stowe@virginmedia.com and harrowsacrechair@gmail.com.

14. Future Dates:

- Tuesday 28 September will take place via Zoom
- Thursday 2 December
- Tuesday 8 March 2022

The dates are fixed by the council who, as well as avoiding clashes with council meetings also make every effort to avoid major religious festivals.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)