

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

Attendance

Group A

Religious traditions and Christian churches

* Mercedes Afnan	Baha'i
A Ven Sumana Sramaner	Buddhist
A Diana Ohene	Christian (Catholic)
A Ciara O'Flaherty	Christian (Catholic)
~ Vijay Hirani	Hindu (Swaminarayan)
* David Cryer	Humanist (Harrow Humanists)
A Varsha Dodhia	Jain
* Gill Ross	Jewish
A Doreen Samuels	Jewish
~ Zafar Khalid	Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
A Asad Omar	Muslim
~ Mohammed Amar	Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
~ Paramjit Singh-Kohli	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)
- A Cllr Christine Robson Labour
- * Cllr Angella Murphy-Strachan Labour

Cllr Dr Lesline Lewinson Conservative (reserve)

- * Cllr Simon Brown Labour representing Cllr Christine Robson
- Cllr Sasi Suresh Labour (reserve)*

Advisor to the SACRE

- * Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

Clerk

- * Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

For item 6.

Nadia Pervez, RE Lead from Vaughan Primary School

* 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 Ciara O'Flaherty, Varsha Dodhia, Asad Omar and Cllr Christine Robson. Retrospective apologies received from Doreen Samuels.

Diana Ohene and Ven Sumana Sramaner were also unable to attend.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Zafar Khalid, Mohammed Amar and Paramjit Singh-Kohli.

No apologies had been received.

Membership:

Group C

The committee needs more representatives from teaching associations. Alison will raise this at the next subject leaders' meeting.

Action: Alison

Quorum

The constitution states that:

A quorum shall consist of at least eight members of the whole number of the SACRE and will include at least two representatives from Group A (one Christian and one Non-Christian), and one representative each from Groups B, C, and D.

As there was no Christian representative present from Group A the meeting was not quorate.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 28 September 2021 (previously circulated)

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

p.4. Item 6. Workforce data

It was noted at the last meeting that Whitefriars appears to achieve high levels of RE teaching. Lesley advised caution when reviewing the data on which this was based; Alison will investigate.

Action: Alison

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

5. Local and National updates

National

- **NASACRE Virtual Training courses (previously circulated):** NASACRE is running a range of online training. Details have been circulated to SACRE members.

- **AGM:** the AGM will take place in Birmingham on 23 May. It will be a face-to-face meeting and conference in Birmingham. Harrow usually sponsors a

member to go to the conference and it is a good idea to nominate the member and organize travel arrangements in good time.

Dr Richard Kueh, the lead RE inspector at Ofsted, is again one of the keynote speakers and will be updating members on developments at Ofsted.

Delegates at the conference will be in a position to pass on crucial advice to schools about Ofsted's expectations for RE.

The AGM takes place a few days before NASACRE publishes a major report on RE and delegates will have a preview of the headlines of this report in advance of publication.

Recommendations from the RE Commission in its report, *Religion and World Views: the way forward*, released in September 2018 remain in abeyance for the present as many of the recommendations require legislative change and funding from central government.

This is relevant for Harrow SACRE as it means that the locally agreed syllabus, due for its five year review, will continue to be taught in Harrow schools.

Local

- **RE Network for primary Subject Leaders:** the primary subject leaders will be meeting next week. The focus of the meeting is Resources and teachers will be reviewing and sharing resources. They keep in touch via WhatsApp.
- **Agreed syllabus:** the locally agreed syllabus has been the subject of current WhatsApp exchanges.

Four options are available when a syllabus is due for review:

- The current syllabus can be retained just as it is;
- The current syllabus can be retained in essentials but updated with some new materials;
- A syllabus from another LA can be brought in: some London SACREs have purchased syllabuses from Hampshire or Somerset, which can be customized for local needs with the parent authority's permission;
- A commercially produced syllabus can be purchased: RE Today Services is a major provider; this is an expensive option; again it can be tweaked to reflect local conditions.

Harrow teachers were asked for their views. They were unanimous in wanting to retain the present syllabus but agreed that it should be updated e.g. with the current language for attainment targets and EY material. The teachers want to build on the good work already achieved.

Gill commented that the passion under which the locally agreed syllabus was created was generated by the fact that it was for Harrow by Harrow.

It is necessary to bring it up to date to ensure that it is responsive to local needs. Harrow SACRE should also be aware of how it is being implemented. The original syllabus did not include lesson plans and teachers have worked creatively and effectively to put the syllabus into practice. Alison and Lesley have discussed the possibility of creating a web page to share and manage resources more effectively.

- **Convening the Agreed Syllabus Conference:** Lesley explained the constitutional steps by which the agreed syllabus conference is convened: to initiate this process, SACRE must call on the LA to convene an AS Conference. If the LA agrees, SACRE members can participate in the conference but first the LA needs to approach the nominating body for each member to seek their permission for their member to serve on the AS

Conference. This is usually done via the Clerk. Lesley explained it is sensible to include a clause to the effect that if no reply is received by a specific date, SACRE will assume that the nominating body is agreeable to their nominated SACRE member serving on the conference.

As this meeting is not quorate, the decision to do this cannot be formally taken. However, Later in the meeting, Alison agreed to convene a quorate group on line to agree Vaughan's determination. See 6 below. At the same time, she will secure their agreement to proceed with the next steps for convening the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Note: Group D do not have a vote in this decision to avoid potential conflict of interest, but members of Group D can take part in the Conference.

Harrow LA has agreed that decisions taken at virtual meetings are valid.

6. Determinations

Vaughan Primary School

Alison introduced Nadia Pervez from Vaughan School and welcomed her to the meeting. Nadia has joined the meeting to present the case for granting a determination to Vaughan School and to answer any questions. Vaughan have also sent an impressive amount of supporting documentation which has been circulated to members.

Nadia explained that the process started in 2019 and was interrupted by Covid. The school has consulted parents, governors and staff. There was a meeting and questionnaire for parents: responses revealed interest and questions from non-religious parents, reflecting the changing demographic of the school. Feedback from all parents showed that they were supportive of the school's seeking a determination. The governors were also in support. Nadia had also been able to consult the children for their views via the School Council which represents the wide range of pupils at Vaughan.

Assemblies: Alison explained that she has attended two assemblies at Vaughan and was impressed by their quality. Her only concern was the lack of a reflective moment. Lesley agreed that there should be a reflective moment: it could take the form of a prayer or a few words of guidance from the leader. It should be a distinct element, different from a lesson, creating a different mood. Some schools would mark the moment of reflection by lighting a candle. It was like pressing the pause button on the hectic pace of school life.

Views of the children: Alison also talked to a group of children. She asked them what they liked about assemblies and what they had learnt. They remembered their assemblies well and felt that they were helpful in developing their spirituality. One wanted to know more about Buddhism.

All schools have had to rethink how to do Collective Worship since Covid but the children Alison spoke to were all delighted when assemblies were resumed. She asked if they have whole school assemblies. They explained that they have not had whole school assemblies since Covid but the older children remembered whole school assemblies from before the pandemic.

Questions and discussion

David asked for evidence of the governors' agreement. The relevant meeting minutes have not been included in the documents sent round to members. Alison and Nadia will check and resend.

Action: Alison and Nadia

SACRE's job is to advise schools of their legal obligations. It is clear that Vaughan takes Collective Worship seriously and the children value it and benefit from it. The school makes time for Collective Worship. Nadia confirmed this: although Covid has led to restrictions on assemblies and the expectation that Collective Worship will take place in the classroom, it is timetabled in. There is a reflective moment in school assemblies but not usually with a prayer. Lesley pointed out that assemblies perform a different function from Collective Worship but Collective Worship can nest within the context of assemblies but should be differentiated by some clear demarcation.

David like the idea of transition - encouraging children to carry the reflective moment with them into their lives.

Mercedes commented that asking a child to share their reflection can empower them. Nadia explained that the children are encouraged to talk to each other and contribute to assemblies, especially within the class unit.

Alison really enjoyed her experience of Vaughan.

James acknowledged that Vaughan's Collective Worship policy makes clear that reflective moments do what they are meant to do.

James also observed that the school has close links with the local Anglican church and asked if other religious leaders visit the school. Nadia explained that this does not happen at the moment but she is working on it. They have lots of other visitors.

James mentioned that he does a regular slot with a local primary school and this is now done on line – an option which might be worth exploring.

The school has had fewer visitors because of the pandemic. Certainly before Covid, the school had a wide range of visitors. They are starting to come back now, but not as many as Nadia would like. Alison explained that SACRE is very willing to help and includes a number of potential visitors among its members.

Nadia then left the meeting

Discussion

In the discussion that followed the following points were made:

Alison felt that the school was trying hard in difficult circumstances. They have clearly thought about how they offer Collective Worship and provided supporting documentation – apart from the governors' agreement as noted above.

James was impressed by Nadia and the materials.

Lesley felt that these compliments should be included in the letter sent out to the school in recognition of what the school is achieving, especially when there is little or no training in Collective Worship in teacher training.

Members present were in agreement that the determination should be granted but the decision cannot be formally ratified until the meeting is quorate. The school will be informed.

Action Alison

To ratify the decision, Alison nominated one person from each group and asked them to canvas opinions from members of their group.

Group A: Gill

Group B: Mary

Group C: Fatema

Group D: Camilla

All group B were present so their agreement was secured at the meeting. Fatema was in a group of one, but had left the meeting at 8.15 so would need to give her agreement.

Alison will send out an email telling members who their representative is and asking them to contact their representative with their view as soon as possible.

Action: Alison

All members had received the documentation so there was no need to delay their decision.

If the determination were granted, it should be backdated to this meeting so the determination would expire in December 2026.

The on line meeting of the representatives will be on Thursday 13 January.

Final question

James had one more question: he commented that quite a lot has been required from Vaughan and Marlborough – the two schools most recently applying for determinations – but do we know what other schools are doing? How do we find out?

Lesley replied that many SACREs ask this question and the answer is that we don't really know. We can invite schools to tell us but can only invite. As a body, SACREs should look at trying to offer schools support for Collective Worship. There has been some discussion about providing guidance for Collective Worship and this could be considered further. This might take the form of some exemplars to which schools could refer. It is the duty of SACRE to advise on Collective Worship as well as RE. SACRE could send a letter to schools reminding them of their obligations but schools would then be fully justified in turning to SACRE for support and guidance.

Mary added that the new Head at her school has just asked her to train staff in Collective Worship.

7. Collective Worship Policy

Alison and Lesley have drafted the Collective Worship Policy. This will go on the website and once there, it will be open to comments and questions. SACRE is looking for schools to tell us about their Collective Worship. Alison will alert schools when the policy is on the website

8. Priorities for the Year ahead

- **AS Conference:** see 5 above.
- **Annual Report:** Lesley will draft this using the new template. Vivian and Alison will prepare their contributions.

Action: Lesley, Alison, Vivian

9. News from Faith Groups relating to schools

There was no news from faith groups.

10. Any Other Business

Harrow Interfaith: When sending her apologies for the meeting, Varsha sent this link to a video that Harrow Interfaith supported for Covid vaccinations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4i5YIHspcE&t=1s>

11. Future Dates:

- **Tuesday 8 March**
Online or in person? In view of present uncertainty regarding the new omicron variant, Members agreed to delay making a decision until nearer the time. It will be Camilla's last meeting. Camilla's attendance at SACRE has been second to none and she spoke warmly of how much she has enjoyed being on this harmonious and thoughtful committee.

Dates put forward from the council

- **Tuesday 28 June 2022 rearranged to Thursday 23 June via Zoom to enable Lesley to attend.**
- **Wednesday 14 September 2022**
- **Tuesday 6 December 2022**
- **Wednesday 1 March**

Clerk's note: we may well have to reconsider the other dates as well in view of Lesley's commitments. Also Diana cannot attend on Tuesdays and as we have seen at the last two meetings, we need her presence in order to be quorate.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)