

**HARROW SACRE**  
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2014**

**Attendance:**

**Group A: (Religious traditions and Christian Churches)**

~ *Mr Zia Baig*  
\* Ms Mercedes Afnan  
\* Mr Mike Bishop  
\* Dr Julie Crow  
\* Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal  
\* Mr Vijay Hirani  
\* Ms Varsha Dodhia  
~ *Councillor Asad Omar*  
~ *Ms Beverley Wilson*  
\* Mr Neville Ransley  
\* Mrs Gill Ross  
\* Mrs Doreen Samuels  
~ *Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli*  
*A Ven Sumana Sramaner*  
~ *Mr Zafar Khalid*  
*A Ananda Caitanya Das*

**Group B: (Church of England)**

\* Mrs Mary Abbott  
\* Rev'd Philip Barnes  
\* Rev'd Matthew Stone

**Group C: (Teachers' Associations)**

\* Mrs Manju Radia  
\* Mrs Alison Stowe (Chair)

**Group D: (Local Authority)**

Councillors:  
~ *Nana Asante*  
~ *James Bond*  
\* Manji Kara  
\* Camilla Bath  
\* Sasikala Suresh

**Officer**

\*Rachel Bowerman (Senior School Improvement Professional & Adviser to SACRE, nominated by the Director of Education)

**Clerk**

\*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

**Visitors**

Sara Younger, Education Policy and Projects Manager for the Board of Deputies of British Jews  
Andrea Kahn, Head of RE at Avanti House School

\* *denotes presence*

*A denotes absence with apologies*

~ *denotes absence without apologies*

**1. Welcome and introductions:** the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially visitors Sara Younger, who was here to give a presentation on the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition at Pinner Synagogue and Andrea Kahn, Head of RE at Avanti House School who was attending as an interested observer. New councillor member, Manji Kara, introduced himself.

**2. Apologies for absence:**

**RESOLVED:** To note apologies for absence from Ven Sumana Sramaner and Ananda Caitanya Das.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Mr Zia Baig, Councillor Asad Omar, Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Mr Zafar Khalid and Ms Beverley Wilson

Group D: Cllr Nana Asante and Cllr James Bond

### 3. Order of the Agenda

**AGREED:** to take item 5 as the next item, as Sara Younger had to leave for another engagement.

### ***Business Items: Improving standards in RE and collective worship***

#### 4. Resourcing RE and Improving Teachers' Subject Knowledge

##### **The Jewish Way of Life Exhibition**

Sara Younger introduced herself. She is the Education Policy and Projects Manager for the Board of Deputies of British Jews. She handles matters of education policy including the new National Curriculum, and the Examination Boards. She also works closely with the Religious Education Council. The Council has established a "Young Ambassadors" scheme, where young people can report on their positive experiences of RE to ministers at Westminster.

She is here this evening to tell members about the exhibition to be held at the Pinner Synagogue from 9<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The exhibition has been renamed "The Jewish Living Experience" in order to reflect the tactile and interactive nature of the exhibition. It is a traveling exhibition designed to explain Judaism for KS2 and above. It contains a wealth of very rich resources designed to reflect the core values of Judaism with sections on the Synagogue, Torah, Shabbat, the Dietary Laws, Life Cycles, moral and ethical values (such as charity and community cohesion) and Jewish festivals (Sukkot, Shavuot and Pesach). Everyone, whether belonging to another religion or none could find something to relate to in this exhibition. The exhibition also includes attractive posters for each of these themes: schools can obtain these to add to their own resources.

Children coming to the exhibition can handle real objects, ask questions and taste food.

Sara Younger tabled some leaflets and will send an electronic version which can be attached to the minutes.

##### **Action: Sara Younger and Clerk**

Sara Younger asked members to share news of this exhibition with their schools and faith groups. They will be invited to the launch on 9<sup>th</sup> June when there will also be a training session for teachers between 5 and 6pm. Sara Younger will leave her email address so that members can contact her with any suggestions and questions.

She added that the Board also runs "Jewish Living Tours" of Jewish London for secondary school pupils. This includes a visit to a school and synagogue. Members of the committee are welcome to join these tours. These tours can act as an encouragement to other faith groups to undertake similar activities and by enhancing understanding of another religion improves tolerance and good will.

Rachel Bowerman added that although there will be school visits to the exhibition during school hours, there will also be opportunities for groups from the members' own communities to visit the exhibition. Stan Conway at the Pinner Synagogue is the person to contact regarding visits, Sara Younger is the contact for training sessions.

A suggestion was made that as the next SACRE meeting falls within the time of the exhibition, the committee might consider holding its next meeting at the Pinner Synagogue so that they could enjoy the exhibition. This suggestion was discussed in more depth later in the meeting. *See 12 below.*

Rachel Bowerman thanked Sara Younger for her presentation. Sara Younger then left the meeting.

At this point, Rachel Bowerman and Doreen Samuels passed round pastries to celebrate the festival of Purim. Doreen Samuels explained the symbolism of her pastries which are called Hamantaschen (Haman's pockets) or Oznei Haman (Haman's ears) in memory of the great villain Haman who persecuted the Jews in Ancient Persia. Esther and Mordecai planned to overturn Haman's plan and, having saved the king Ahasuerus from a plot on his life, were given permission to fight back against Haman's persecution. After some gory battles, the Jews saved themselves and the festival of Purim celebrates this victory. It is a carnival festival which involves feasting and dressing up. It aims to eradicate the memory of Haman – someone who commits genocide out of greed and hatred. This is done by getting so drunk that Mordecai

and Haman become indistinguishable. There are four imperatives for the festival: to read the story, hold a family meal, make gifts of food to friends and provide poor Jewish families with the provisions for a family meal.

**5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013 (pages 1-7)**

**The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.**

**6. Matters arising from the minutes**

**7. Harrow SACRE Annual report 2012-13**

**a) To receive the analysis of the published RS examination data and entry patterns**

Rachel Bowerman tabled the examination data for the annual report. This comprises the 2013 GCSE, AS and A level data for Harrow and nationally. Following the statistical table, Rachel Bowerman has provided a short background summary. This explains that the English Baccalaureate was introduced in 2009/10. It includes Science, Languages and Humanities but does not include RE. There was a big outcry about this omission. In October 2013, the DfE published a release showing that as a result of the Baccalaureate, there had been an increase in entries for humanities subjects, especially in community schools. RE did not gain from this. The summary also includes a short extract from "True picture of 2013 RE exam results not being told" from *RE Today Services*. This report reveals that for the first time since the introduction of the RE short course in 1995, there has been a decrease in the number of entries for the short course. Although there has been an increase in entries for the full GCSE in RE this does not offset the fall in numbers for the short course, so there has been an overall decrease in the number of entries nationally.

Locally the number of entries for the GCSE short and full courses show similar trends. The rise in the number of students taking the full course and drop in the number taking the short course is attributed to the fact that the short course is no longer available to the whole cohort so that students are not being offered their entitlement in RE. The Harrow results apply to non-denominational schools only. This includes academies. The national data includes the faith schools where all pupils are entered for the full course.

A member queried the figure of only 5 students taking AS level in Harrow in 2013. Rachel Bowerman will check this.

**Action: Rachel Bowerman**

This downward trend is not unexpected, but has happened more rapidly than anticipated. The RE Council and NATRE are concerned that fewer students are taking GCSE RE and a consequence of this will be fewer teachers of RE which will limit the offering of RE at GCSE still further.

In response to a question as to the results of the lobbying of the government to accord RE its rightful place in the curriculum, Rachel Bowerman informed members that this does not appear to have had any effect on government policy.

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

**7. SACRE's Monitoring the Quality of RE: receiving a school self evaluation report**

**Glebe Primary School**

**Context**

Rachel Bowerman introduced this item. In response to a suggestion made at an earlier meeting that it would be helpful to have some contextual data when receiving these reports, she opened her presentation with some background information on Glebe.

Glebe is a large primary school of 519 pupils. About 25% of pupils are on FSM (Free School Meals). The school includes children from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the largest minority being AOW (Any Other White), which in Harrow mostly comprises children from Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. After this the Indian children are the second largest group (28%), Any Other Asian (25%), African (10%). For most children at the school, English is not their first language. Mobility is high at 26% and the school deprivation factor is also higher than average at 0.28.

The educational profile of the school shows that results at KS1 are lower than the national average and the school attributes this to the high proportion of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. By the end of KS2 however, the picture has changed and the proportion of

children obtaining level 5 is higher than the national average. Overall, both achievement and progress results are above the national average at KS2 and these results are also reflected in the analysis of the progress and achievement of groups within the school. In 2009, Ofsted judged the school to be outstanding.

Donna Barrett, the Head Teacher, recognises the importance of religion to the majority of children at her school. When Rachel Bowerman reported to the primary heads, she was one of the first to support the submission of RE reports to SACRE. She regretted that neither she, nor other members of her senior staff were able to attend this evening to present their report, but that she would welcome feedback from SACRE.

### **The Report**

The report judges RE to be outstanding. In response to a question, Rachel Bowerman confirmed that the school has a RE subject leader and that also the senior teacher for Teaching and Learning is very committed to RE and represents this subject on the Senior Leadership team.

Members noted that the commentary and evaluations in the text of the report very closely replicate the Ofsted subject specific criteria which are used by HMI subject inspectors for their thematic inspections. Other sections are generic and are perhaps extracts from the whole school SEF. Members recommend that schools personalise their commentary so that it gives a true picture of RE at the school.

### **Feedback**

Members observed that had a school leader been able to attend our meeting, they would have liked to learn more about the evidence base for the judgements reached. It is reported, for example, that book scrutinies and subject reviews are conducted and that at team meetings and whole staff meetings the findings are shared.

A specific example or verbatim quote would add authenticity and relate the findings of the report to the school. A member who is also a Chair of governors suggested that, if he were a governor at Glebe, he would like to observe a RE lesson in progress.

Since RE is evaluated as outstanding at Glebe, Members would like to see the school apply for the RE Quality Kitemark, gold standard.

At Glebe it is reported that pupils reach high standards in RE and SACRE members would like to learn how senior leaders manage to secure sufficient time for RE when their priority is clearly raising achievement in reading, writing and maths. The strategic decisions made about the teaching of RE could be shared with other schools.

As a result of their analysis of this format for self-evaluation reports, members realise that they would like to see the proforma adjusted so that schools are asked to include:

- Data to show whether children are attaining at or above their expected levels
- An analysis of strengths, priorities for improvement and barriers to further development
- Outline information about how RE is timetabled and who teaches it eg weekly or blocked in half terms; taught by class teacher, during PPA, by HLTA or by a single teacher throughout the school.

SACRE members thanked the headteacher of Glebe and the leader of teaching and learning who completed this self-evaluation, for being amongst the first to submit a report to SACRE and at short notice. Rachel Bowerman will send feedback to Donna Barrett and Lorraine Monteiro and invite them to attend a future SACRE meeting.

**Action: Rachel Bowerman**

### **Further discussion**

**Secondary RE:** a member questioned whether secondary schools were equipped to follow through on the foundations for RE built in the primary schools. It was suggested that the current

emphasis on Maths and Science at secondary level might militate against building up a strong RE department. On the other hand, primary schools are intensely aware of Reading, Writing and Maths in the curriculum and yet some still manage to provide very strong RE.

It would be interesting to know how RE is taught especially in view of the current constraints on the subject. Do schools still have subject specialists or is RE taught by class teachers?

**Resources:** a member queried if schools are satisfied with their resources. Her faith group (the Baha'i community) are currently trying to build collections of resources to help schools. The report on Glebe states that the school enjoys good resources.

**Format:** the format of the report follows the proposals of Harrow head teachers. Some members felt that the presentation by Shaftsbury School at the last meeting though not evaluative, gave more of a flavour of RE at that school. The Glebe report is evaluative. Members would like to see some space for narrative as well as evaluation. They would also like a space for "next steps" and how previous "next steps" have been implemented and any limiting factors.

## **8. Review of Harrow Agreed Syllabus**

### **a) LA Funding for the revision of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus Conference**

Rachel Bowerman tabled a letter from the LA. This announced that SACRE has been allocated funding of £12,260 for the revision of the agreed syllabus.

Matthew Stone opened this item with a report of the Chairs' group meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014. Paddy O'Dwyer, from Harrow ESSO (Educational Strategy and School Organisation) had attended this meeting which was devoted to consideration of how to take a review of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus forward. The grant allocated by the LA will fund up to 12 days of advice and writing time (£6000). The rest of the grant will be used for consultation with teachers, an away day, design costs, administrative support and the launch of the new syllabus. The Chairs' Group had recommended that the new Syllabus should be published in electronic format only and not in hard copy.

Mike Bishop then continued this report. He explained that consideration will be given to what form the agreed syllabus will take. Previously it had largely followed the non-statutory national framework published by the QCA. A new non-statutory national curriculum framework has been published by the RE Council. It proposes three attainment targets:

- Know about & understand a range of religions and worldviews
- Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews
- Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews

There is also a need to provide support for teachers, but this would be separately funded.

Harrow could simply adopt this new framework, but although it gives examples alongside the generic curriculum statements, these do not systematically exemplify what the requirements would look like for each faith tradition. The advantage of Harrow having its own Agreed Syllabus would be that examples from all the faith traditions represented in the RE syllabus could be included alongside the generic requirements.

Some discussion followed in which the following points were made:

- It is crucial to have sound guidance and signposting.
- Subject knowledge is crucial especially when RE is often taught by non-specialists
- The context for teaching RE is very different from when the last Agreed Syllabus was drafted
- At the time of the previous Agreed Syllabus, Harrow had a full time RE advisor who did not have the same time constraints as the present advisor to SACRE who combines this role with a heavy work load as a School Improvement Partner.
- A suggestion was made as to whether media students from secondary schools and tertiary colleges could be used to film and record examples of good practice in RE. These records could be used as a resource and support for teachers. It was agreed that this was an exciting idea, but Rachel Bowerman reminded members that the syllabus is a statutory requirement and so must take priority.

- As well as being able to include a wider selection of examples, as mentioned above, a further benefit of adapting the RE Council framework is that the consultation process in itself develops knowledge and understanding of the subject. Also, when the new syllabus is launched, further beneficial spin-offs occur in the form of training.
- The young people consulted about their experience of RE could, if appropriate, be put forward for the “Young Ambassadors” scheme. *See 4 above.*
- There is a need for training to enable RE coordinators to be more effective in the oversight and monitoring of the teaching of RE by non specialists.
- PE has received national funding which has raised its profile in schools. Despite this, Senior Leadership teams rarely observe PE teaching either by class teachers or outside coaches.
- The British Humanist Association has recently updated their website including a section on Humanism in Schools which is an excellent resource. There must be other quality resources on the Internet

**Members were in favour of Harrow producing its own Agreed Syllabus, using the national guidance but expanding and developing this to make a more comprehensive and supportive framework.**

**b) Proposed methodology and time line**

One of the meeting dates for this year (11<sup>th</sup> September) has been allocated for the Agreed Syllabus Conference and an extra committee meeting scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> October. *See 12 below.* There has been an initial consultation of teachers and they have been supportive of using the RE Council framework as the starting point for developing a local agreed syllabus. Drafting the syllabus will take about a term. The project must be completed within the next financial year. It is envisaged that instead of frequent meetings, small groups of faith representatives and teachers will work together to review the draft at regular intervals.

**c) National regional update including “Old Localism, New Localism: what does the future hold for RE in schools?” a debate at Brunel University on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.**

The Chair introduced this item. She had come straight from the debate at Brunel University to this meeting. The programme included presentations by Janet Orchard who was a project manager for the RE Council Review of RE and Lesley Prior, Chair of NASACRE.

The national picture is that the government is not very interested in RE. There was some discussion of the make-up of SACRE committees and how they relate to other organisations. England has a special relationship with the teaching of RE and this is the envy of many other countries where RE is not taught in schools. It is essential for the future of civic responsibility that we continue to stress the importance of RE. There is some debate at present about where RE is going: making room for RE would make a difference. Rachel Bowerman added that the debate about the teaching of RE in schools is a long-standing one.

**Information Items: improving SACRE’s effectiveness**

**9. Reports from National RE Associations**

- **RE Council newsletter:** Rachel Bowerman recommended this publication which can be viewed on the RE Council’s website. A new report has been published on the impact of RE on cohesive communities. The results are welcome news although not unsurprising. The newsletter has already been discussed in the context of Sara Younger’s presentation and the examination data *See 4 and 6 above.*

**10. Reports from SACRE partners locally and nationally**

**a) Harrow Interfaith Council**

Varsha Dodhia had already left the meeting so there was no further reporting on interfaith activities. The forthcoming “Jewish Living Experience” exhibition has already been covered under item 4.

**b) Faith Communities**

**Mosaic centre:** Gill Ross reported on the cooperative action between three synagogues – the Harrow and Wembley Progressive Synagogue, the Middlesex New Synagogue and the Hatch End Masorti Synagogue – to form a new community centre which will be known as “Mosaic”. This will allow each synagogue to celebrate services in its own tradition and the centre will also serve as a community centre.

## 11. AOB

- Camilla Bath congratulated the Rev'd Matthew Stone on his appointment as rector to St John's, Stanmore. He will be much missed at All Saints and at Stag Lane schools where he is Chair of Governors. St John's is very fortunate to have acquired him and the community in Stanmore are looking forward to working with him.
- Phiroza Gan-Kotwal has been in hospital for 28 days. But she is here this evening – her first outing since she came out of hospital. The committee welcomed Phiroza Gan-Kotwal and expressed their admiration for her dedication.

## 12. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

**Next meeting: Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June**

A suggestion has been made earlier in the meeting that this should be held at Pinner Synagogue as it coincides with the “Jewish Living Experience” exhibition. However, Rachel Bowerman reminded members that the committee had previously agreed (14<sup>th</sup> June 2011, minute 8) not to hold meetings in places of worship, as it might preclude some members from attending.

**It was therefore agreed to investigate holding this meeting in a building separate to the Synagogue or at the Civic Centre as usual.**

**Future meetings in 2014:**

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September (Agreed Syllabus conference)**

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October**

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December**

**Proposed date for spring meeting in 2015:**

**5<sup>th</sup> March:** this coincides with Purim so an alternative date will be found.

**The Meeting closed at 9.15 pm**

**Signed:**

**(Chair)**

**(Date)**