

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 25th JUNE

Attendance:

Group A: (Religious traditions and Christian Churches)

~ *Mr Zia Baig*
* Ms Mercedes Afnan
* Mr Mike Bishop
* Dr Julie Crow (Chair)
* Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal
* Mr Vijay Hirani
A Ms Varsha Dodhia
~ *Mr Asad Omar*
~ *Ms Beverley Wilson*

* Mr Neville Ransley
A Ms Ciara O'Flaherty
* Mrs Gill Ross
* Mrs Doreen Samuels
* Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli
* Ven Sumana Sramaner
* Mr Zafar Khalid

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:
* Ghazanfar Ali *until 8.15pm*
* Kareema Marikar (Vice-Chair)
* Camilla Bath

Reserves:
A Chika Amadi
A Margaret Davine
A Manjibhai Kara

Officer

*Patrick O'Dwyer (Education Professional Lead & Adviser to SACRE)

Clerk

*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

Observers

*David Cryer

To present agenda item 4

Rachel Bowerman, Strategic Leader for PE and Sports for HSIP

Observer

David Cryer

** denotes presence*

A denotes absence with apologies

~ denotes absence without apologies

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Doreen Samuels has brought dates to share as a suitable food for those who may be breaking their fast later.

2. Apologies for absence:

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Ms Ciara O’Flaherty. Ms Varsha Dodhia gave retrospective apologies.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Mr Zia Baig, Mr Asad Omar and Ms Beverley Wilson

Changes to membership

NOTED: Cllr Kareema Marikar is now a full member of SACRE replacing Cllr Sasi Suresh who is Mayoress this year. Cllr Chika Amadi has joined as a reserve.

3. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Paddy O’Dwyer chaired this part of the meeting.

Chair: Matthew Stone, seconded by Vijay Hirani proposed Alison Stowe as Chair. Elected unanimously.

Vice-Chair: Cllr Kareema Marikar was proposed by herself and seconded by Manju Radia. Elected by a majority vote.

Alison Stowe then resumed chairing the meeting

4. Faith matters in Harrow – PE Guidance – Rachel Bowerman HSIP (previously circulated)

The Chair introduced Rachel Bowerman to the meeting in her new role as strategic Leader for PE and Sport for HSIP.

Rachel Bowerman explained that a key entitlement of the package offered to schools is a PE and Sports audit. The government offers ring-fenced funding for PE and Sport and had undertaken to continue this funding until 2020. The audit enables schools to assess their expenditure on sport and its impact.

To ensure that every pupil receives their full entitlement to Sports and PE, schools need updated and refreshed guidance on dress and religious customs in different faith groups.

The guidance document, circulated prior to the meeting, relates only to sport and PE.

Rachel Bowerman explained that this new guidance adopts a different approach to the previously published guidance in “Faith Matters”.

Introduction

The guidance opens with thanks to the faith representatives who have contributed. Rachel Bowerman paid special tribute to Mercedes Afnan for her apposite comments and observations.

The first three bullet points of the guidance cover what people do and wear because of their beliefs. This is followed by the fundamental principles underlying this guidance. This stresses the importance of children receiving their entitlement to PE and Sport and the removal of problems towards achieving this.

The guidance stresses that this document is for guidance only and the school’s curriculum and policy remain the responsibility of the governing body. The guidance will not produce a uniform approach: there is always diversity.

The guidance reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Common Inspection Framework that will be introduced from September. It also reflects Race Equality and Equalities legislation.

The introductory section concludes with extracts from the PE curriculum.

The Guidance

The first section of the guidance covers possible barriers to participation and possible solutions to these.

The second section covers clothing and how to dress in a way that is appropriate to engaging in sport without contravening religious observance.

The third section covers how to engage in PE lessons during periods of fasting and religious observance.

Rachel Bowerman added that she has just received further guidance from Ananda Caitanya Das about the wearing of sacred beads. These should not be removed but a polo shirt should be worn so that they are covered.

Members discussed various aspects of the guidance:

Swimming

Some religions require that children always have separate changing rooms for girls and boys and discreet cubicles within the changing rooms. The wording of the guidance supports these requirements.

Paramjit Singh-Kohli, a representative for Sikhism, asked that Sikhs be added to the swimming section.

Fasting

Zafar Khalid, a representative of the Muslim faith felt that the document gave good advice on fasting. Fasting is only a requirement for those who have reached their religious maturity.

Paramjit Singh-Kohli asked that Sikhs be removed from the fasting section.

Members felt that overall this document gave excellent guidance. The Rev'd Matthew Stone, a representative of the Church of England proposed a vote of thanks to Rachel Bowerman and her colleagues who had assisted in the preparation of the guidance.

Members agreed that the document, with the minor amendments suggested at this meeting, should be published as soon as possible and circulated to schools under the aegis of SACRE.

Questions

A question was asked about guidance on taking public examinations during the season of Ramadan. Should SACRE be involved in compiling this guidance?

Muslim representatives present reaffirmed that fasting was not a requirement for children and that, for those who were of an age to fast, a day could be missed and added on at the end.

Some branches of Islam have stricter and more inflexible observances.

It was suggested that this was an issue in which NASACRE should be involved. The Chair agreed to email NASACRE to see if there was national guidance on this subject.

Action: Chair

The Chair thanked Rachel Bowerman for attending the meeting to introduce the guidance. Rachel Bowerman will make the suggested alterations and return the guidance to Paddy O'Dwyer for publication and circulation.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

Rachel Bowerman then left the meeting

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th March 2015 *(previously circulated and available at the meeting)*

p.2. Item 3. Apologies for Absence

Mrs Gan Kotwal gave her apologies for the meeting.

Mrs Gill Ross was present and Mrs Doreen Samuels was absent.

With these amendments the minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

6. Matters arising from the minutes

p.2. item 3. Apologies for Absence

The Chair has sent a card to Ciara O'Flaherty

p. 3. Item 7. Harrow SACRE Annual Report

All the actions connected with the Annual report have been completed. *See item 7 below.*

7. Annual report 2014 and preparation for Annual report 2015

Paddy O'Dwyer reported that all members' comments have been incorporated and the report has been sent to NASACRE.

It will be sent out to schools and posted on the SACRE page of the Council website.

Members proposed a vote of thanks to Paddy O'Dwyer for completing the report.

8. Update from the Harrow Agreed Syllabus Conference *see the minutes of the ASC held earlier this evening.*

9. Feedback from the NASACRE conference *(notes from Conference previously circulated)*

Paddy O'Dwyer had circulated his notes from the key note speaker, The Right Hon Charles Clarke. The notes demonstrated CC's support for RE in the curriculum and delegates had spent the rest of the day discussing his commentary.

The RE curriculum and the place of SACRE

CC believes that the 1944 Education Act is out dated and that RE's current place in the curriculum should be reviewed. SACRE occupies a unique position in relation to place of RE in the curriculum and deserves more support from government, as one of the few remaining institutions supporting community cohesion.

In response to a question, Paddy O'Dwyer explained that CC no longer has any status in government; he is a lecturer at UEA.

A recurrent theme of CC's talk was that there are not enough sources of advice with in depth knowledge about RE for teachers to call on. This is why SACRE has such an important role.

The right to withdraw children from RE

A faith group representative commented that the nature of RE has changed since the 1944 Act: there is no longer the same emphasis on religious instruction. The emphasis is now on finding out about religions; there are no elements of indoctrination. The concept of withdrawing children from RE was founded on this doctrinaire approach. It is now questionable whether parents should retain the right to withdraw their children from RE when, in the modern world, it is so important that children should learn about other faiths.

National guidelines for RE

Paddy O'Dwyer said that CC's speech had given rise to a thought-provoking conversation. Delegates felt that it would be helpful to have national guidelines on what should be taught in RE.

A faith representative from Judaism added that the Jewish community have grappled with what children should be able to access about other faiths. A representative from the Teachers' Associations commented that it is a child's right to have a broad view of his or her community.

Training of Teachers

This subject will be debated for a long time to come. The decline in numbers of suitably qualified people to deliver training is a national problem.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- there is considerable expertise around this table
- teachers need pedagogy as well as expertise
- it would be helpful to have national expectations of what should be taught but that
- actual delivery should happen locally
- not all schools follow the National Framework.
- CC favoured a minimum entitlement in RE for all children.

Question

Is it possible to see how networks between schools operate in Harrow? Paddy O'Dwyer replied that he is new to SACRE but at a recent INSET he got the impression that RE teachers feel isolated. A representative of the Teachers' Associations added that it is important for teachers to have scaffolding to work on. There is little support for teachers in some subject areas.

RE training for Harrow teachers

The Chair thanked Paddy O'Dwyer for this report. She commented that Harrow is fortunate in that RE courses are still offered: other authorities do not offer such courses. Some SACREs have no LA support, no funding and nothing to offer teachers.

Paddy O'Dwyer summed up by saying that he had found the discussion and questions very stimulating and they had given SACRE much to reflect on. He suggested that SACRE members could read and reflect on CC's speech and the committee might wish to frame a letter to the government on these issues.

Paddy O'Dwyer had also circulated notes of last year's guest speaker Stephen Lloyd. He felt these would be of interest to members. Members noted this document.

10. Faith Calendar and School Attendance 2015-2016

Paddy O'Dwyer stressed the importance of this guidance for schools. He thanked those representatives who have already sent responses and urged those who have not yet responded to send him the key dates of religious festivals as soon as possible. He will be working on this guidance over the summer ready to send out in September. Paramjit Singh Kohli informed members that not all the Sikh dates are fixed yet for 2016, but he will send those he has.

Action: Paramjit Singh-Kohli

Paddy O'Dwyer concluded this item by saying that with so much hanging on school attendance, it is vital for schools to have this guidance that comes with the authority of the faith leaders.

11. Receiving School's Self Evaluation Report

Paddy O'Dwyer reported that he has not received any school evaluation reports. He asked members what they would find helpful to receive from schools. Members felt that the SEF form was a useful tool. Rachel Bowerman had encouraged head teachers and RE subject leaders to complete it by reminding them at meetings. Members felt that it could continue to go out to school in the same format but would need to be updated to reflect the Common Inspection Framework.

12. RE CPD to improve Quality of Teaching and Effectiveness of Leadership

The Chair reported on a meeting of RE Subject Leaders. They had worked in groups on different sections of the RE national framework published in 2013. Each group had then fed back to the full session. The Chair will send their ideas to Lesley Prior.

Action: Chair

The Chair felt that the session had been a good use of time and the teachers had been very creative in their ideas. In the EYFS, for instance, teachers had discussed a variety of activities involving role play, understanding the world and religious artefacts. At KS 1 the approach became more teacher-led involving looking at different communities. At KS2 the characteristics of key religious figures such as the Pope or the Dalai Llama were considered.

Paddy O'Dwyer commented on a real hunger in the group to work together and share ideas. He felt that it was important to build on this.

A representative from Judaism commented on the importance of exploring key concepts such as awe, wonder and miracles.

A representative from the Teachers' Associations informed members that there is some recently published material which explores the qualities of a religious leader.

A representative from Judaism reflected that key qualities can be identified in any leader. A representative from the Baha'i faith added that qualities such as kindness, compassion, love and justice are common to all faiths. They come under character building and connect to British values.

13. AOB

- **Islamophobia:** a representative from the council asked SACRE to consider how it could combat Islamophobia. The Chair replied that this is an area where good RE teaching is germane in order to tackle these misunderstandings. A representative from the Church of England added that school governors are addressing radicalisation and it is important to recognise the difference between fundamentalism and piety.
- **Mitzvah Day is 22nd November 2015.** This is the Jewish Social Action Day.
- **Diwali is 12 November.**
- **Contact list:** the Clerk will compile a list of members with their email addresses. She stressed that this is confidential material under data protection: addresses should not be shared or used for other than SACRE purposes.

Action: Clerk

- **The Islamic Society of Dubai** had visited the Gurdwara to break their fast with the Sikh community.

14. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

Thursday 22nd October
Wednesday 2nd December
Thursday 3rd March 2016

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She expressed regret that Nina Will had been unable to make her presentation and will invite her to a future meeting.

The Meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)