

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 28 JUNE 2018

Attendance

Group A

* Mercedes Afnan
* Ven Sumana Sramaner
* Mike Bishop
* Neville Ransley
* Ciara O'Flaherty
A Vijay Hirani
* David Cryer
* Varsha Dodhia
* Gill Ross
A Doreen Samuels
* Zafar Khalid
* Asad Omar
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 Muslim Council)
Muslim
Sikh
Zoroastrian

Group B

* Mary Abbott
* Revd Kate Blake
~ *Revd James Power*

Church of England

Group C

* Alison Stowe (Chair)
A Teri-Louise O'Brien
Vacancy

Teachers' Associations

Group D

* Cllr Camilla Bath Conservative (Vice Chair)
A Cllr Ghazanfar Ali Labour
* Cllr Peymana Assad Labour

Local Authority

A Cllr Simon Brown Labour (reserve)
* Cllr Dr Lesline Lewinson Conservative (reserve)
* Cllr Angella Murphy-Strachan Labour (reserve)

Advisor to the SACRE

* Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

Clerk

* Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

* *denotes presence*

A denotes absence with apologies

~ *denotes absence without apologies*

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Lesley Prior took the Chair for this part of the meeting.

Election of Chair

Alison Stowe has agreed to stand again as Chair. There were no other nominations. She was proposed by Neville Ransley, seconded by Camilla Bath and elected unanimously.

Alison then resumed chairing the meeting.

Election of Vice-Chair

Camilla Bath has agreed to stand again as Vice-Chair. There were no other nominations. She was proposed by Asad Omar, seconded by Varsha Dodhia and elected unanimously.

2. Welcome and apologies for absence

Alison welcomed new councillors, Cllr Peymana Assad, Cllr Angella Murphy-Strachan and Cllr Dr Lesline Lewinson who were attending for the first time. Members introduced themselves.

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Doreen Samuels, Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Teri-Louise O'Brien, Revd James Power, Vijay Hirani and Cllr Ghazanfar Ali.

Revd James Power has attended only one meeting since he was appointed to the committee in September 2016. Although he has tendered apologies for the meetings he has missed, it is difficult to see how the committee can benefit from his expertise. The Clerk will write to him.

Action: Clerk

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 22nd March 2018 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

p.2. Item 3. Matters arising from the Minutes

(p.2. Item1. Welcome and apologies for absence)

SACRE membership

New Muslim representative: the Chair informed members that she has written three times to Harrow Central Mosque and received no reply. She is now seeking a possible member through her contacts with the RE co-ordinators. The constitution stipulates that this member must be from the Central Mosque. The representative should also be someone with an interest in Education. Zafar Khalid has connections with Harrow Central Mosque and will make enquiries.

Action: Zafar Khalid

New Teacher representative: Manju Radia has retired, so the committee will also need to recruit a new teacher representative. This representative must be nominated by one of the Teaching Unions.

p.4. Item 4. Monitoring of Syllabus and website *see also Item 6 below.*

Exemplar letter

Members supported the idea of writing to schools to inform them of the website monitoring exercise being carried out by members of the committee and to encourage schools to put information about RE on their websites. Members would also like to offer help and support on behalf of Harrow SACRE. However, members wanted a letter that was more carrot and less stick than the one considered at the last meeting. Websites do not always give a true reflection of the RE syllabus and how it is delivered. Lesley will draft a letter with a larger proportion of carrot and circulate it for members' approval.

Action: Lesley Prior

The Chair will then work on the final draft with Paddy O'Dwyer and the letter will go out to Heads under the Chair's signature at the end of this term and at the beginning of next term.

Action: Alison Stowe

Lesley added that it is much harder to gather data from Primary schools. A national survey of RE in primary schools by the National Association of Teachers of RE is currently underway. The results should be published by the end of June/beginning of July. Alison will circulate the link to members.

Action: Alison Stowe

p. 5. Item 8. Progress on determinations

Glebe school

Lesley and Alison have not received the paperwork for Glebe school's determination. Varsha will forward the email.

Action: Varsha Dodhia

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

5. Visit to Cedars School (report from Marry Abbott and Gill Ross)

Mary, who teaches at Cedars, invited Jewish representatives Gill Ross and Doreen Samuels to visit the school at the time when Year 1 was considering "Why do we have special days?" and Year 2 was doing a topic on "Why do we have rules?"

Mary explained that she had taught three sessions with Year 1 about special days and in particular Jewish special days in preparation for the visit. With Year 2 she had looked at the Ten Commandments and school rules. Gill and Doreen then spent an afternoon with these year groups.

Gill then took up the report. She explained that the session had been a pleasure to plan using the key questions from the Agreed Syllabus. She and Doreen had used a structured approach and from this had developed another session for Newton Farm. It was a wonderful experience and the school was very welcoming. The session was engaging, fast-paced and age appropriate. She felt that it gave the children an experience that demonstrated the importance of a living tradition.

Mary added that the children were asked to write an 11th commandment: one group of girls suggested: "Never waste a minute of your time!"

At Newton Farm, Gill and Doreen delivered a whole school assembly and two workshops.

Q. How many Jewish children are there at Cedars? Mary replied that there are no Jewish children at Cedars. She felt it was important for the children to learn about another tradition. Phiroza suggested that a workshop like this would be useful for SACRE members too.

The Jewish New Year festival Tu B'Shvat celebrates the New Year for trees, the natural world and creation. It is celebrated with a special Seder and eating different fruits. In more progressive communities it has become a day of social action for repairing the world and promoting the message of caring for the planet.

Q. How was this message put across to the young children of Year 1? Gill explained that there was lots of singing and food.

Q. Were there any films or photographs of the occasion? There were no films or photographs.

Varsha informed the committee that a member of the Jain community had also visited Newton Farm, taking artefacts to show the children. There is a Jain resource box for schools.

Alison spoke of the importance of preparation for school visits. Gill and Lesley had sent their plans to the school prior to the visit. Lesley added that it is also important for the school to prepare the children. Not all visitors will be trained teachers.

Gill felt that it was helpful for the children to interview visitors, especially if they were not teachers. If children can frame thoughtful, open-ended questions, these can be sent to the visitors beforehand.

Gill explained that the Board of Deputies offers training which enables people to become accredited school visitors.

The Humanists also offer training for school visits. David is a school visitor for the Humanists. He contacts schools beforehand and they often have a clear idea of what they want but don't always have subject knowledge. Alison commented that the big questions in the Agreed Syllabus should provide a way into the subject.

Mary, Gill and Mercedes are all experienced visitors. Mercedes has also visited Newton Farm.

Lesley commented that Harrow SACRE has the beginning of a directory of people who are willing to visit schools.

Suggestions for raising the profile of Harrow SACRE were discussed. These could be included in the newsletter that goes out to schools and also on the SACRE website:

- Bullet points of main items discussed at SACRE meetings
- Need for a Teacher Representative
- Speakers who can visit your school

Alison thanked Gill and Mary for their presentation.

6. Monitoring of syllabus and website

Members felt it was a positive step to inform schools that SACRE is monitoring their websites but that this should be done in a friendly way. Schools that covered RE on their website should be congratulated. SACRE should express appreciation for what schools are doing. Alison will draft an appropriate form of words. *See also 4 above,*

Q. What about schools that do not mention RE? So far all schools have mentioned RE on their websites.

Members pointed out that it is not always clear from the website that schools are teaching RE. A school can say it is teaching the Agreed Syllabus, but lesson plans may not support this statement. Communication with schools should be framed sensitively: there can be wonderful things on a website with nothing happening in reality and vice versa. SACRE should have standard letter that can be tweaked for individual schools. SACRE should always offer support but avoid having a template as this would encourage schools to adopt a form of words without ownership.

Q. When training RE co-ordinators, has Lesley had any feedback on the introduction of the new syllabus? The biggest problem is the structuring of lesson plans. Mary and Alison will format lesson plans and hopefully end up with a full set. Lesley commented that teachers do not get much RE training: now it is 3 twilight session a year; in the past teachers would go away for residential weekends.

There is a RE co-ordinators WhatsApp group where RE co-ordinators exchange ideas, but it needs more co-ordination.

Varsha mentioned peer led groups of 10-11 year old in the Jain community who are creating assemblies. Alison felt that this was very inspiring. Lesley commented that within faith communities there are resources that teachers are unaware of: SACRE can also promote these to schools.

7. Conferences

- **NASACRE 25th Jubilee Conference and AGM, 24 May 2018 (report from Lesley Prior)**
For the benefit of new members, Lesley Prior explained the relationship of local SACREs to NASACRE. This year's conference celebrated NASACRE's silver jubilee and 30 years since the 1988 Education Act. The conference was held in the Merchant Taylors Hall in the City of London. The theme of the conference was "Stronger together – celebrating the power of community". The keynote speaker was Dr Vanessa Ogden, CEO of the Mulberry Schools Trust. Other speakers included David Hampshire from the Interfaith Network and the Rt Hon Charles Clarke. There were presentations from SACREs around the country about good practice. All presentations can be found on the NASACRE website: <http://www.nasacre.org.uk/conference-and-agm/2018/2018-papers>
- **AREIAC (Association of RE Inspectors, Advisors and Consultants) Conference, Bristol, 2-3 July**
Lesley will attend the AREIAC conference. The conference theme is "REflecting plurality in RE". Keynote speakers are Professor Bob Jackson, Professor Denise Cush and Dr Farid Panjwami.
- **20:20 RE – Practical, Policy, Powerful Knowledge, Crewe, 13-14 Oct**
This conference is for teachers of RE. SACRE members can also attend. Further information can be found on the website: <https://www.natre.org.uk/courses-events/20-20-RE/>

8. Annual Report 2017-18

SACRE is required to produce an Annual report. This is published on the NASACRE website and copies are sent to the DfE, local schools, governors and Harrow Council's Education Committee. Lesley bases the report on key points from the minutes. The report also includes examination results from local schools. These will not be available until November, so she will bring a draft report to the December meeting for members to consider. The outline of SACRE's activities over the year will be broad brushstrokes. The report covers the academic year from September 2017-August 2018. Members discussed what might be included. Newton Farm has compiled a little booklet of what children have enjoyed about their RE visitors. The report is about what SACRE has done not about RE in general.

Agenda item for 11 December 2018

Varsha Dodhia left the meeting at 8.45

9. Determinations

Application from Marlborough School (previously circulated)

Lesley recapitulated the purpose of determinations: schools are required to provide an act of collective worship "of a broadly Christian character". Community schools may apply for a determination which exempts them from providing "broadly Christian" collective worship. Schools apply for determinations if they feel that "broadly Christian" is inappropriate for their demographic. Determinations last for five years.

Even if a school has a determination, its act of worship should retain the qualities of worship with "reverence and veneration to a divine being or power". Determinations are usually for the whole school. A school might look at the percentage of its intake from different faith traditions and plan a worship programme that reflects this.

Marlborough was granted its first determination in 1988. Members considered the paperwork submitted with the application and noted the following:

- The school's demographic would entitle the school to seek a determination.
- The application stated that the governing body supported the determination but there was no evidence of a discussion or a formal decision recorded in

the minutes. Lesley felt that a determination should not be granted without an undertaking to seek formal ratification of the application from the governing body.

- The application mentions assemblies but not Collective Worship; confusion between the two is not uncommon. Lesley and Alison are preparing guidance on Collective Worship, but currently there is no guidance for schools on this.
- The application does not say why they want a determination.
- The children's work attached to the application shows classroom work and not evidence of collective worship.

It would be helpful to schools if there were some guidance on the form itself. There used to be a guide to Collective Worship on the SACRE website, but this could not be located when members checked.

It is the duty of SACRE to make sure that the process has been properly negotiated or the school can be open to Freedom of Information requests which are sometimes sought to support arguments about the decline of Christianity. The school should show that governors, parents and pupils are supportive. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from RE. If there are no withdrawals, this indicates that parents and children are happy with the school's RE provision.

SACREs sometimes contact schools before their determination is due for renewal and this gives the schools time to factor in governors' meetings and consultation with the school community.

Members felt that this school needs support in completing its application. There may be a spate of applications next year and it was suggested that SACRE should contact all schools in Harrow. This had been done in the past, but the previous SACRE advisor had advised that schools could meet the requirements of the Education Act and provide collective worship that reflected their own community without seeking a determination. Also, at one time, it was expected that the law on the "broadly Christian character" of collective worship would be modified, but this has not happened. This means that SACRE has not been reminding schools and determinations have not been kept up to date. If a determination lapses, the school loses it.

SACRE felt that advice on completing the application for a determination is inadequate and in reminding schools of the need to renew determinations, they might be sending a message that was not consistent with previous advice. It is, however, the job of SACRE's advisor to say what the law is. If a determination has lapsed, SACRE should note this.

Taking all this into account, the following decisions and actions were agreed:

Alison will put a reminder in the Schools' Bulletin encouraging schools to renew their determinations and offering support.

Alison should write to Marlborough School pointing out the need to reference the governors' minutes, the absence of evidence of collective worship and any other areas where the application falls short. She would offer a visit from Lesley and herself to work with the school, using this a pilot project which will enable SACRE to improve its guidance to schools about determinations.

Guidance on Determinations will be refreshed. There does not appear to be any guidance about determinations or collective worship although long standing members remembered that these documents had existed in the past.

Harrow SACRE website should be reviewed. It is linked to the Harrow Council website but is not well sign-posted and some of its publications are difficult to locate.

10. Commission on RE: Final Report

Members have already reviewed the draft report of the Independent Commission on RE. Harrow SACRE responded to the survey. The final report is due out on 12 September

2018. Some copies may be released early and there is likely to be press coverage on Sunday 9 September. This will be a major discussion item at the next committee meeting on 9 October.

Item for next agenda

It is not NASACRE's remit to respond to the report but on 13 September the NASACRE executive will compile discussion points for SACREs to use. SACREs may wish to include some comment on the report in the schools bulletin. It is important to ensure that schools are not confused by the report. Lesley will send an electronic link for the report to governor Chairs and Clerks. The proposed changes may require new legislation; this is unlikely to happen in the near future.

11. News from Faith Groups

- **End of Ramadan:** Asad reminded members that Ramadan ended on 15 June and for the first time, prayers had been held in Pinner Park and were very well attended.
- **Soul Kitchen:** the Harrow Central mosque has been running a "Soul Kitchen" providing free hot meals for those in need. These take place on the third Saturday of each month. The final Soul Kitchen takes place on 21 July.
- **Humanist conference:** David informed members that a one day conference on "Understanding Humanism" will take place on 10 July from 10.00am-4.30pm at the Conway Hall in London. One of the speakers will be Professor Anthony Grayling.
- **Mosaic community:** <https://choosemosaic.org/> Doreen reported on the celebration of the Third Seder at the Mosaic community. Muslim and Jewish women celebrated Nisa Nashim together at a member's house – this was well attended.

12. Any Other Business

- **Farmington Fellowships:** Alison advised members about Farmington fellowships: these provide money for supply cover to allow RE teachers days out of school to develop lesson plans and projects. The next deadline for applications will be in January. Details have been sent to all RE teachers in Harrow. Further information can be found at <https://www.ltlre.org/projects/farmington-fellowships/>
- **Mike Bishop:** Alison announced that Mike is retiring from SACRE after 35 years. He is a founder member of Harrow SACRE. He has lived through 5 AS conferences. He is Harrow SACRE's best friend.
Mike responded by saying that although RE has changed over the years, the way that SACRE works has not changed: it continues to work with commitment and energy. He will continue to maintain his interest in SACRE's activities.

There were no further items of any other business

11. Future Dates:

- Future dates 2018-19
 - Tuesday 9 October 2018 (changed from 18 October and originally planned for 2 October)
 - Tuesday 11 December 2018 (as previously circulated)
 - Tuesday 19 March 2019 (as previously circulated)

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.30pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)