

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 19 MARCH 2019

Attendance

Group A

* Mercedes Afnan
* Ven Sumana Sramaner (*from 7.50*)
* Bob Dawson
A Carolyn O'Brien
* Ciara O'Flaherty
* Vijay Hirani
* David Cryer
* Varsha Dodhia
+ *Gill Ross*
* Doreen Samuels
* Zafar Khalid
* Asad Omar
~ *Tahir Hashmi*
* Mohammed Amar
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
Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
Muslim (representing Harrow Central Mosque)
Sikh
Zoroastrian

Group B

A Mary Abbott
A Revd Kate Blake
* Revd James Power

Church of England

Group C

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

Teachers' Associations

Group D

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

Local Authority

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

Advisor to the SACRE

A Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

Clerk

* Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

* *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 Carolyn O'Brien, Gill Ross, Paramjit Singh-Kohli Mary Abbott, Revd Kate Blake, Fatema Rahemani and Teri Louise O'Brien.

Tahir Hashmi was also absent. No apologies had been received.

As noted at the previous meeting, Lesley Prior is on long term sick leave. She is making good progress. At this time, with so many changes taking place in the world of education, her expertise is much missed. Members signed a card for her.

Zahra Mamdani from Marlborough School was expected but did not attend.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 11 December 2018 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

p.3. Item 3. Determinations

Glebe Primary School: Alison has written to Glebe informing them that their application for a determination was successful. Her letter was endorsed by Patrick O'Dwyer. Patrick suggested that SACRE keeps a record of schools granted determinations. Fortunately, David has drawn up a spreadsheet for this very purpose.

5. Monitoring of syllabus and website

Alison informed members that a number of schools in Harrow are becoming academies; Priestmead and Welldon Park have formed an academy trust and some Catholic schools are also converting to academies. This means that SACRE no longer has a remit with these schools but with so many changes afoot affecting RE education (*see items 6 and 9 below*), it is more than ever important to monitor schools' RE syllabus.

Cuts in school budgets have also reached crisis point at local and national level; this puts pressure on staff and parents. Members were particularly concerned at the necessity for staffing cuts. Parents are expected to provide essential equipment for their children; Harrow is often perceived as a prosperous suburb but many families are poverty stricken and living in conditions of deprivation.

6. News from NASACRE

- **Consultation on the new Ofsted framework** (*previously circulated: email from NASACRE executive, extract from draft Ofsted inspection pack and slides from a presentation by Claire Clinton, advisor to Newham SACRE*)

Alison explained how C of E and Catholic schools have a diocesan review of the RE syllabus and maintained schools are inspected by Ofsted.

Under the new Framework, there will be a "quality of education" judgement: the curriculum is at the heart of this judgement replacing "quality of teaching, learning and assessment" and "outcomes" judgements in the current framework.

The focus will be on a broad and balanced curriculum – a more holistic approach than the exclusive focus on Maths and English in the current Framework. RE education will be part of this broad and balanced curriculum.

Alison pointed out that Ofsted criteria change frequently but that this is a significant shift.

The deadline for response to the consultation is 5 April. Alison convened the Chairs' group, comprising representatives from each group:

- Group A: David Cryer and Doreen Samuels

- Group B: James was unable to attend but will ask Mary Abbott who has represented group B before.
- Group C: Alison Stowe
- Group D: Camilla Bath.

The group will meet on 3 April at 3.15 to frame Harrow SACRE's response to the consultation. Members should send any comments to their representatives by this date.

Action: Members and Chairs' Group

7. Annual Report 2017-18 (previously circulated)

Patrick O'Dwyer has completed the Annual report. It has been sent to NASACRE.

The report can be downloaded from the Harrow website:

http://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/12560/sacre_annual_report_2017-2018

(Clerk's note: SACRE website is much clearer now and link from the council website is more accessible)

The report is also accessible from the NASACRE website:

<http://www.nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-140-2017-18-harrow.pdf>

8. Determinations

- **Norbury Determination**

Report on Norbury Assembly 14 March 2019

As part of Norbury's application for a determination, members had been invited to visit the school and attend an assembly. David and Bob had attended the assembly and Phiroza and Mercedes had joined them later for a tour of the school and meetings with staff and pupils. These members shared their impressions of their visit to the school.

David:

- Nearly 700 children were present for the assembly. The content of the assembly focussed on prizes, reports, celebration, singing and dancing. It also involved parents. Alison explained that Collective Worship can also take place in classrooms;
- The assembly was very inclusive;
- The children made a presentation on children's rights;
- Norbury school is also a pioneer and national leader on FGM education;
- The school is in touch with local and national media: representatives from ITN and BBC London have visited the school;
- The children spoke clearly: they were very articulate;
- The thought for the week, presented by a student, gave an inclusive message.

Bob:

- The head teacher gave a strong lead to the assembly;
- The children were engaged for forty minutes;
- Affirmation came across strongly: the children's energy was channelled in a positive way;
- The school displays a well-ordered environment;
- The atmosphere is warm and welcoming;
- Children were clearly used to visitors.

Mercedes:

- The sensory rooms were impressive;
- The school shows understanding towards refugee children who form part of the school community;
- The school was very warm and welcoming;
- Festivals from different cultures are celebrated;
- Children are encouraged to share their faiths;
- The children clearly enjoyed an element of fun in their learning.

Ciara had visited the school on another occasion: she confirmed these impressions, adding that the school accommodates some very needy and challenging children. Staff are happy working in the school.

Phiroza:

- Phiroza found the meetings at the end, with pupils from Years 5 and 6 and with teachers and the Head Teacher, were more rewarding than the school tour;
- The school gave their visitors a comprehensive view of the school with input from pupils and staff.
- She was surprised at the amount of attention given to Zoroastrianism;
- Security and Safeguarding are excellent.

Q. Did the assembly contain a devotional element – a space for quiet reflection? Bob explained that the school celebrated a variety of festivals at different times of year. These might be grouped around a theme, e.g. fasting. All religious themes are explored across the curriculum.

Q. Is there a form of words to acknowledge a divine power? Bob explained that there was a reflective moment in the assembly. Children had also written their reflections which they read out.

Supporting documentation had been sent earlier in the day but too late to circulate to the committee before the meeting. This will be circulated to members before the next meeting.

Teri was unable to attend this evening and the application has yet to be discussed and signed off by the governing body. Alison summed up by saying that members have given a very positive picture: the school is clearly engaged and taking responsibility for representing all faiths and none.

It was agreed that Norbury's application for a determination will come to the next meeting.

Item for next agenda

- **Marlborough Determination** (*previously circulated: Application form, Assembly themes, Collective Worship policy, RE policy, Impact and analysis of Collective Worship, examples of children's work and comments from Bob Dawson*)

Marlborough has now provided more documentation than before. At the last meeting, governors had felt the lack of evidence for involvement of governors and the school community. Members still had some questions about the application. Bob summed this up by saying that he felt there was a lack of following themes through and of consistency.

There was concern over how different faiths were celebrated and which festivals were chosen. The school was applying for a determination but their emphasis seemed to be mainly on the Christian festivals.

Alison explained that this could be a response to a letter she wrote to the school last term to remind them that, as their previous determination had expired, their acts of collective worship should be broadly Christian in character.

On the other hand, Marlborough has provided examples of children's work showing evidence of consideration of different faiths but no evidence that these were the result of collective worship.

There is a difference between RE and Collective Worship. Alison defined this, explaining that RE is taught in the classroom according to the locally agreed syllabus; Collective Worship takes place as a group activity exploring ideas, e.g. through assemblies. SACRE has a booklet explain good practice for assemblies.

This prompted a discussion in which the following points were made:

- Teachers are struggling to provide good practice: SACRE could offer support from schools like Glebe and Norbury; Priestmead is also a hub for sharing good practice with other schools
- There are some good resources for assemblies available but SACRE could also publish an Assembly booklet giving examples and ideas for Collective Worship; Alison explained that this was definitely on the agenda before Lesley was taken ill: there is plan for Lesley, Patrick and herself to write a document for Collective Worship.
- Alison will write to Head Teachers via Patrick to ask them to share examples of good practice.

Action: Alison Stowe

- Members also shared their thoughts on the secularisation of society. Although Harrow has one of the highest percentages of religious affiliation in the country: this is true for children but not necessarily the case among teachers, who may not be local. Many teachers do not have a faith background to draw on when promoting Collective Worship.
- Marlborough has been through a number of recent upheavals but still continues to run a ReGen afternoon club as it has been doing for many years.

Members agreed that SACRE needed to approach the lead person at Marlborough to offer bespoke help. David will be the torchbearer in this as he is visiting the school this week to give a Humanist Assembly. Once he has contact details, Alison will write a gentle email offering support, either from Gill or another SACRE representative, or from another school such as Glebe.

Action: David Cryer and Alison Stowe

9. Commission on RE: Final Report

The final report has been published. It proposes a number of changes to the RE syllabus; NASACRE was disappointed at the government's indifferent response although recognises that the government has other preoccupations at this time. It would like the government to make a more vigorous response to the recommendations in the report.

NASACRE has now shifted its focus to the new Ofsted Framework (*see item 6 above*).

10. News from Faith Groups pertinent to schools

- **Moriah School:** Doreen reported that Moriah School has joined a Multi-Academy Trust initiated by the United Synagogue. The school is thriving.
- **Volunteers in Schools:** the Board of Deputies has initiated an accredited programme to train volunteers going into schools for assemblies and talks on Judaism.
- **Hands and Feet Print for Peace:** Mercedes reported that West Lodge School is taking part in an international initiative to promote peace. **Alison will ask the head teacher if a representative from the school could come and talk to SACRE about this.**

Action: Alison Stowe

- **International Women's Day:** Varsha reported on batik banners and artefacts made from recycled plastic on display at the Neasden Temple as part of International Women's Day celebrations.

12. Any Other Business

- **New Islam Resource for School and Teacher Pack** (*previously circulated: email from Imran Kotwal at Muslim Learner Services, sample pages and artefacts poster*): SACRE has received details of this resource pack. It costs £175. Alison would like Muslim representatives to carry out a further assessment of the quality of the materials in this pack. Muslim representatives would like to know if schools are still using a resource pack previously approved by SACRE and also more about Muslim Learner Services. The following actions were agreed:
 - Alison will find out what resources Harrow schools are currently using.
Action: Alison Stowe
 - Vivian will write to Imran Kotwal asking for further information and if possible more examples of the resources. She will ask if Muslim Learner Services would send a representative to make a presentation at the next meeting. She will also resend the information she has already received from Muslim Learner Services to the Muslim representatives.
Action: Vivian Wright
 - Asad, Zhafar, Ghazanfar and Mohammed will carry out a further assessment and report back to the next meeting.
Action: Asad Omar, Zhafar Khalid, Mohammed Amar and Cllr Ghazanfar Ali

- **Hindu Resource audiobook, “The Ramayana: An Ancient Indian Epic”** (*Previously circulated: email from Shreyas Pulle and audiobook presentation*): SACRE has received details of this resource for Hinduism. It costs £125. Alison would like a further assessment of this resource by a Hindu representative. The following actions were agreed:
 - Vivian will resend the information she has received from Shreyas to Vijay Hirani. She will write to Shreyas to update him on the Committee’s agreed action.
Action: Vivian Wright
 - Vijay will carry out an assessment of this resource and report back to the next meeting.
Action: Vijay Hirani

- **Naw Ruz:** Mercedes has brought delicious snacks to celebrate the Baha’i festival of Naw Ruz meaning “New Day”; this festival celebrates the New Year represented by the first day of spring (March 20) and new beginnings.

- **Purim:** Doreen brought traditional pastry cookies filled with poppy seed jam and cinnamon swirls in celebration of the festival of Purim when the Jewish community commemorates their deliverance from the plot of Haman as related in the Book of Esther in the Bible.

. **There were no further items of any other business**

13. Future Dates:

- Future dates 2018-19
 - Thursday 27 June 2019
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- Future dates 2019-20
 - Tuesday 15 October
 - Tuesday 10 December
 - Tuesday 24 March

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.58 pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)