

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Meeting:	Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date:	13 October 2004
Subject:	The Work of SACRE
Responsible Chief Officer:	Director of Learning and Community Development
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Education and Lifelong Learning and Human Resources
Status:	Part 1
Ward:	All
Enclosures:	1) The draft Harrow SACRE Handbook, including the draft Harrow SACRE Constitution 2) The Harrow SACRE Report 2002-2003 3) The A to Z of School Collective Worship (The above enclosures have only been circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee but are available on request)

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report outlines the statutory duties of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and provides an outline of its work to support Collective Worship and the teaching of religious education in schools.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note and comment on the report.

3. **Consultation with Ward Councillors**

- 3.1 Not Applicable.

4. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 This report addresses the Council's stated priority of promoting Harrow as a centre of Lifelong Learning and is seen to impact on the Corporate Performance Management Indicators as follows:

- Raising levels of achievement in Religious Education in Key Stages 1-3
- Developing and diversifying to raise achievement at Key Stage 4

5. **Education Reform Act 1988 - Background Information**

- 5.1 The 1988 Education Reform Act required each Local Education Authority to constitute a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). This requirement has been

endorsed in all subsequent Education Acts. Prior to 1988 some local authorities, including Harrow, already had a SACRE in place to support schools in their efforts to provide religious education and collective worship of a high quality. Part V, Chapter III of the Education 1996 sets out the constitution, membership and duties of a SACRE.

5.2 Each SACRE must consist of 4 groups:

1. Representatives of Christian and other religious denomination as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions of the area
2. The Church of England
3. Associations representing teachers
4. The Local Authority.

5.3 The duties of SACRE are to:

- Advise the authority upon matters connected with religious worship in community schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus as the Local Authority may refer to SACRE or as SACRE may see fit.
- Give advice on methods of teaching, choice of materials and provision of training for teachers.
- Following an application made by a head teacher of any community school after consultation with the governing body, to consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in the case of that school, or any class or description of pupils in that school. If granted this is called a "Determination".

5.4 In addition to the Education Reform Act 1988 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) requires each SACRE to publish an annual report.

6. Constitution of Harrow SACRE

6.1 Harrow SACRE's constitution takes account of all of these legal requirements.

6.2 The constitution of its four groups are:

1. Representatives of the Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, other Christian denominations, the Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism are nominated through the Harrow Inter Faith Council following consultation with appropriate local and national bodies. Other religious denominations may, from time to time, be nominated through Harrow Inter Faith Council.
2. Three representatives of the Church of England are nominated by the London Diocesan Board for Schools
3. Six teachers are nominated by the Harrow Teachers' Consultative Committee.
4. Three representatives are nominated by Harrow Council.

6.3 Harrow SACRE's duties are set out in the constitution, based on requirements concerning collective worship, religious education and an annual report. During its four meetings a year with occasional working parties and its work with the School Development Service, it covers statutory duties in all of the required areas.

7. Collective Worship

- 7.1 SACRE publishes to schools a manual on collective worship entitled "*The A – Z of Collective Worship – 26 Questions and Answers for Harrow Schools*". In this manual it sets out legal requirements for daily worship and suggests ways of making these occasions inspiring and meaningful. It explains the procedure to be followed by schools if they wish to drop the legal requirement that school worship be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" and considers whether such a determination is appropriate for that school, based on information on the family backgrounds of its pupils.
- 7.2 As a monitoring procedure, SACRE studies reports from OSTED and the local authority regarding collective worship and evaluates the work of Senior Management Teams in providing good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development through worship and the ethos of the school.
- 7.3 Many SACRE members accept invitations to contribute to school worship.
- 7.4 SACRE works with the School Development Service to provide in-service training on the provision of good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

8. Religious Education

The Harrow Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

- 8.1 SACRE advises Harrow Council of its legal responsibility to produce a local agreed syllabus of religious education through the work of an "Agreed Syllabus Standing Conference" and to review the syllabus every five years. It is instrumental in setting up the Conference, which traditionally consists of SACRE members plus invited consultants.

Implementing the Harrow Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education

- 8.2 SACRE maintains a close relationship with the School Development Service in organising in-service training for teachers.
- 8.3 It contributes to the annual Harrow Service Review through examining evidence of standards and the quality of teaching and learning in religious education by studying OFSTED and local reports and analysing GCSE results.
- 8.4 Members take a keen interest in materials that are used in lessons, which are frequently demonstrated during meetings, and understand the importance of information technology as a means of helping pupils to research aspects of religion and to present their work professionally. SACRE members frequently provide resources for schools from their faith communities, and visit schools to assist teachers with explanations of their own beliefs, traditions and experiences.
- 8.5 Each SACRE meeting includes a report from a school, when members look forward to hearing about different approaches to religious topics, frequently trying them out themselves.
- 8.6 SACRE's close connection with local faiths through the Harrow Inter Faith Council results in considerable curricular enrichment, such as schools' participation in the Harrow Inter Faith Festival and national competitions organised by the different religions.
- 8.7 Members are keen that religious education should contribute to cross-curricular initiatives and advise on materials for Citizenship, Personal, Social and Health Education, Education for Sustainable Development and community events such as Black History Month.

9. The Annual Report

- 9.1 SACRE produces an annual report, which is circulated to the Department for Education and Skills, The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, Harrow Councillors and Officers, Schools, Governing Bodies and the public through library copies and Harrow's web-site.
- 9.2 It is analytical and evaluative in nature, comprising sections on progress against the SACRE Development Plan, advice given to Harrow Council, reports on religious education and collective worship, links with local and national authorities, its work with governing bodies and details of its administration.

10. Training for Governors

- 10.1 On an annual basis SACRE organises training for governors in carrying out their statutory duties concerning collective worship and religious education. If they find it difficult to attend the in-service training, SACRE offers to send a representative to governing body meetings in individual schools to carry out this training.

11. SACRE's Role in the Community

- 11.1 In common with many SACREs nationwide, Harrow SACRE has moved beyond simply carrying out its statutory duties and has become a means of encouraging religious faiths to work together to create a cohesive local community. Members appreciate Harrow as a borough where a high proportion of the community takes faith seriously and are aware of the particularly rich and lively blend of local religious traditions.
- 11.2 "News from schools" and "News from the faiths" appear as items on every agenda. This practice unites schools and faith communities in understanding and in the desire to give children the best opportunities they could have in religious education and worship.

12. SACRE Administration

- 12.1 SACRE publishes a SACRE Development Plan, advice on collective worship and a yearly calendar of religious festivals, when pupils may be granted authorised absence. It publishes a scheme of work to complement the Harrow Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education, a manual on opportunities for spiritual development and occasional documents by individual members and groups to boost school resources.

13. Finance

- 13.1 SACRE manages an annual budget of £5,560 to cover the expenses associated with its work, a breakdown of which is given in the annual report.

14. Legal Observations

- 14.1 SACRE's work fulfils the statutory requirements outlined above

15. SACRE's Strengths

- 15.1 Schools have shown particular appreciation of SACRE's work in:
- Providing a clear Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education in the same format as the subjects of the National Curriculum.

- Providing a scheme of work to complement the Harrow Agreed Syllabus with a range of ideas for teaching and learning and model assessment tasks.
- Providing links with the community through lists of recommended visits and visitors.
- Providing clear guidance on collective worship.
- Providing support as required, adapted to the particular needs of a school.

16. **Ways Forward**

16.1 SACRE intends to play a more active role in advising schools of their obligations and responsibilities, particularly as in an OFSTED report, leadership and management cannot be deemed satisfactory or better unless all statutory duties are fulfilled. This includes those involving daily collective worship and an appropriate amount of time for religious education. From September 2004 SACRE will contact all schools when they have examined those parts of the OFSTED Report that concern collective worship, religious education and opportunities for spiritual development, to applaud the good practice that is reported and to offer support to overcome any shortcomings. It will work with all schools to stress the importance of fulfilling legal requirements. In this way SACRE will become directly involved in those parts of School Improvement Plans that focus on collective worship and religious education and will make itself responsible for ensuring that statutory requirements are met in all schools.

17. **Supporting Documents & Background Papers**

- The draft Harrow SACRE Handbook, including the draft Harrow SACRE Constitution (*This is in draft form and will be discussed and ratified, with amendments if necessary at the next meeting of Harrow SACRE*).
- The Harrow SACRE Report 2002-2003 (*The Harrow SACRE Report 2003-2004 is in preparation*)
- *The A to Z of School Collective Worship*
- 1988 Education Reform Act (for background)
- QCA guidance

18. **Author**

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