

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 12 July 2017

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, Robert Evans and Keith Onslow
Ms H Arnold, Mr S Mahmood, Mr C Town,
Reverend S Varney and Mrs E Whitman

Also Present:

Carol Arnfield, LBB Head of Service for Early Years,
Schools Standards and Adult Education
Kieran Osborne, LBB Educational Advisor

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Reverend Roger Bristow be elected as Chairman, and Councillor Keith Onslow be elected as Vice-Chairman, of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the 2017/2018 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Jefferys, Councillor Sarah Phillips, Denise Angell, Samantha Barnett, Virginia Corbyn, Arvinder Nandra and Ray Hagley.

Councillor Robert Evans apologised for having to leave the meeting early due to other commitments.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH MARCH 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th March 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

B) MATTERS ARISING

Minute 25: School Visits

The Educational Advisor had sent feedback forms to the schools following visits, and those returned had been provided to members. It was noted that the responses received had been very positive and useful.

5 ORAL UPDATE & PUBLICATIONS

The Chairman advised members of an additional visit that he had made, along with SACRE member Councillor Robert Evans, to James Dixon Primary School on Thursday 30th March 2017, following an invitation from Ms Heather Hawthorne to attend their RE Day. This was a termly activity which involved some students visiting external places of worship, and representatives from the local faith communities were invited to visit the school.

SACRE members observed gentlemen from the local synagogue and mosque speaking to the students. The young man from the mosque talked about what it was like to live as a Muslim in the United Kingdom. He invited questions from the children, and it was a very positive experience. Councillor Evans said that the visit had been interesting and that the children reflected the school's achievements, being impeccably behaved throughout the presentations. The Chairman agreed that the children had been very polite and respectful, and a delight to visit.

During the visit, SACRE members also saw collective worship taking place and were accompanied on a tour of the school by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors. It was noted that no response was given when the Chairman enquired as to how RE was normally delivered at the school, and when asked if SACRE members could visit again, the Headteacher responded that another RE Day would take place the following term. Councillor Onslow said that he had been unable to attend the visit on 30th March, but he would like to attend the next RE Day at the school, and would happily pose those questions to the Headteacher again. The Chairman advised that the school seemed willing to invite SACRE members to visit and once the date of the next RE Day was confirmed it would be circulated to the group.

ACTION: Chairman / Clerk

6 SCHOOL VISITS

SACRE members visit local schools to observe collective worship and the teaching of Religious Education. On Wednesday 8th March 2017, the Chairman and Educational Advisor had visited Blenheim Primary School, along with SACRE members; Councillor Keith Onslow, Mrs Virginia Corbyn, Mr Arvinder Nandra and Reverend Steve Varney.

A further visit was undertaken by the Chairman and Educational Advisor to Langley Park School for Girls on Wednesday 24th May 2017, along with

SACRE members; Mr Mahmood and Mr Nandra. A detailed report of the school visits and feedback received from Ravens Wood School and Blenheim Primary School was considered by SACRE members.

The Chairman and Educational Advisor said that attending the meetings of the Primary and Secondary Headteachers had allowed them to raise the profile of SACRE in their minds, and to reassure them of the processes that it followed. These occasions had also resulted in invitations to visit some schools.

The schools visited had shown a willingness to open up and share, which allowed SACRE members to observe that what they said was being delivered in terms of Religious Education, was actually happening and taking place effectively. It was important to acknowledge that in some schools, assemblies were a time for spiritual and moral reflection, which was not deemed as collective worship.

Blenheim Primary School allocated time for meditation throughout the school as an introduction to spirituality, and using a variation of the Agreed Syllabus, had shown good evidence of the curriculum. Religious Education in the school allowed positive encouragement for the children to ask questions, and not just the teacher delivering information. When the visit had been made to Langley Park School for Girls, the assembly had been used for the school to carry out its own version of a General Election, which had allowed students the opportunity to think through what mattered. Members considered that collective worship was not being delivered in the school as it should be. The Educational Advisor responded that the majority of school assemblies would be about morals and many schools had introduced moments of reflection to encourage students to think about a spiritual direction.

A discussion took place regarding school's legal requirement to deliver collective worship and whether the SACRE could influence this. It was considered that as the majority of the boroughs secondary schools had separated themselves from the Local Authority and become academies, the legal requirement was still there, but there was no one to enforce it. The onus would be on the SACRE to press this point, and visits to the schools would concentrate minds. It was suggested that during visits, schools could be reminded about the Bromley SACRE guidance on collective worship, and a copy of the document could be left with the senior leadership team. This would be a way of reminding them of the expertise around the table, and that there were resources available if they wanted to improve their offer. Members considered that a letter should be sent to all schools at the beginning of the academic year, with which a copy of the collective worship document could be included. It could highlight that the SACRE had visited schools and observed the delivery of collective worship in an effective way, and would welcome further visits to see good practice, or discuss the challenges schools faced in being able to deliver. Members felt that SACRE was a body to offer support, which was an experience most schools would welcome if they knew it was available.

ACTION POINT: LBB Educational Advisor

The Chairman advised members that he had attended the Church Schools Festival at Rochester Cathedral. Cudham CE Primary School had taken part, and had invited SACRE members to visit the school the following term. Once further details were received, the clerk would circulate to members.

ACTION POINT: Chairman / Clerk

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the report of the visit to Blenheim Primary School and Langley Park School for Girls be noted.**
- (ii) feedback regarding SACRE visits received from Ravens Wood School and Blenheim Primary School be noted.**
- (iii) the Clerk to notify SACRE members of arrangements for school visits during the autumn term.**

7 NASACRE CONFERENCE AND AGM

The Chairman had attended the NASACRE Conference and AGM which was held on Tuesday 16th May 2017 in York. The conference theme was 'Preparing for life in Britain today: the contribution of RE'. There were two Keynote Speakers; Dr Joyce Miller, one of the Commissioners recently appointed by the RE Council and Professor Aaqil Ahmed, from the School of Media and Performing Arts, University of Bolton. The Chairman had prepared a report on the conference which was considered by SACRE members.

The Chairman said that it had been an interesting day. The morning session had been delivered by Dr Joyce Miller, who gave an overview of the Commission for RE's history over the last few years, the work it was currently doing and the reports it had produced on RE and its effectiveness. There was an emphasis placed on the lack of religious literature in contemporary society, and the role of RE to tackle this.

The afternoon session was led by Professor Aaqil Ahmed who had previously worked as Head of Religion and Ethics at Channel 4 and the BBC. Professor Ahmed spoke passionately about the need for SACREs to help raise religious literacy amongst all sections of society. He highlighted that the media's lack of understanding was echoed by people using social media as a vocal platform to reinforce their own prejudices concerning religious belief. Editors in broadcasting and print media generally 'run scared' of stories involving religion, as they are worried about getting it wrong, so do not want to tackle it. It was noted that there were no dedicated Heads of Religion at these organisations and that it was just grouped in with other areas. It was Professor Ahmed's view that part of the reason for the lack of religious literacy was down to the failure to communicate what it means to be a person of faith within a community, which resulted in an increase of prejudice due to lack of understanding.

The Chairman advised that further information regarding the Conference and AGM could be accessed via the NASACRE website.

(Councillor Evans left the meeting at 7.05pm).

8 SACRE SELF EVALUATION

It was suggested that prior to the meeting, members look at the following sections of the SACRE Reporting and Evaluating Toolkit and come ready to discuss their thoughts:

Group A members (representatives of other faiths and Christian denominations) were asked to focus on Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community.

Group B members (representatives from the Church of England) were asked to focus on Section 3 – Collective worship.

Group C members (teachers) were asked to focus on Section 2 – The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus.

Group D members (Councillors) were asked to focus on Section 4 – Management of SACRE.

The Educational Advisor would complete Section 1 – Standards and Quality of Provision of RE.

At the meeting SACRE members were invited to divide into their membership groups to discuss and come to a consensus. Results of the self-evaluation can be seen in the table appended to these minutes.

Additional points arising from the discussion are listed below.

Section 1 – Standards and Quality of Provision of RE

The Educational Advisor considered that *Key Area 1F – Relations with academies and other non-LA maintained schools* met the advanced criteria and was evidenced by his meetings with Headteachers and their willingness to agree school visits. It was felt the SACRE's main successes were visits to schools and establishing communications and relationships with school leaders and the barrier to success was the shortage of RE specialists in some schools. Suggested areas for development included a survey of schools to inform the SACRE and for the Local Authority to collect KS4 outcomes.

Section 2 – The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus

The teaching group highlighted that for *Key Area 2C – Launching and implementing the Agreed Syllabus*, only the developing criteria could be met due to the SACRE having 'little training provision for implementing the revised syllabus'. *Key Area 2E – Developing the revised Agreed Syllabus*, was considered to just meet the established criteria, and it was noted that this was an area that could be worked on.

Section 3 – Collective worship

The Church of England group advised that for *Section 3 – Collective worship*, the self-evaluation criteria met was considered to be the same as 2016. It was however considered that some of the Key Areas would fit between the established and advanced criteria.

Section 4 – Management of SACRE

The Councillors group considered the SACREs successes and barriers to success. They felt the main successes were visits to schools and lively discussions, and the barrier to success was the general view of RE. A wider awareness of the SACRE within schools was felt to be an area for development for the Local Authority.

Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community

The other faiths group considered that for *Key Area 5A – SACRE's membership*, Bromley SACRE met the advanced criteria. It was noted that this was evidenced by membership lists and attendance at meetings, which was provided in the SACRE Annual report.

The group felt that *Key Area 5B – SACRE's understanding of the local community*, could only meet the established criteria. This was due to there being no capacity for the SACRE to 'take active steps to inform itself further about the distinctive needs and opportunities' created by the 'religious, ethnic and cultural diversity in the local area', or 'develop initiatives with local Inter Faith groups'. *Key Area 5C – SACRE's engagement with the community cohesion agenda* could only be rated as developing because it was felt there was an individual grasp of 'what community cohesion means', but not a collective one. It was also believed that the SACRE was struggling to 'promote RE's contribution to schools of faith communities'. *Key Area 5D – SACRE's role within wider LA initiatives on community cohesion* was also thought to only meet the developing criteria as this was not considered to be a priority for the Local Authority.

Further discussion took place regarding *Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community*, with members feeling that it was difficult to do anything with regards to this as it was not currently on the agendas of Ofsted, the Government or the Local Authority. The Chairman advised the group that Birmingham SACRE apparently had a budget of £35K to promote community cohesion, which had been allocated as a direct response following the 'Trojan Horse' investigation in Birmingham schools. Members considered that this was retrospective budgeting, with investment only happening once something had gone wrong, and asked if there was any evidence that anything had improved. It was suggested that documents and minutes of Birmingham SACRE meetings could be sourced from the internet, and that a direct question could be posed with regards to the sharing of best practice. **ACTION POINT: Chairman / LBB Educational Advisor / Clerk**

Other members said that they would prefer to see what SACREs without any budget were doing, as it was felt that Bromley SACRE was doing as well as

could be expected with the resources available, and that if good ideas were sourced there would be no capacity to deliver them anyway. Members queried if an average had been indicated for the budget that SACREs were allocated across the country. The Chairman said that had not been provided, but there were lots of SACREs with no actual budget that just requested money needed for specific tasks, and some with a definite budget, but much fewer than previously. A similar self-evaluation exercise had been carried out at the NASACRE Conference and AGM, with the consensus being that SACREs were rated as 'established', and not 'advanced', due to lack of resources.

RESOLVED that the SACRE self-evaluation be agreed and SACRE members consider how to improve on the scores going forward.

9 SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN

SACRE members had been provided with a draft action plan that had been drafted in June 2017, which outlined the core activities for 2017-2018. It had been based on previous year's activities, and members were asked if they felt anything was missing, or if there were any changes to be made. Members queried if the draft action plan differed from the version provided for the previous year. The Chairman confirmed that previous versions referred to actions that were the responsibility of the RE Advisor, and as this role no longer existed those tasks had been removed.

It was recommended that objective number 4 – *'Engage with local schools to observe and understand Religious Education and Collective Worship approaches'* should be amended to read *'Annual engagement with local schools to observe and understand Religious Education and Collective Worship approaches'*. It was agreed that an annual letter could be sent to schools, encouraging them to engage with the SACRE and advising them of the resources and support available to them, as discussed under agenda item 6.

A member suggested that an additional objective be added to the draft action plan to include the sharing of best practice with local SACREs. It was considered that SACREs, such as Bexley who faced the same conundrums as Bromley, could be invited to present once a year to provide an update on how they were doing, with the offer of providing the same presentation from Bromley SACRE at one of their meetings.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the SACRE draft action plan for 2017-2018 be noted.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Mahmood advised members that the prize giving for the Islamic Competition would take place at Darul Uloom on Thursday 9th November 2017. The programme of the evening would be the same format as previous

years, and further information and an invitation for SACRE members to attend would be circulated. This year marked the 20th anniversary of the Islamic Competition, and Mr Mahmood intended to invite previous participants and winners back to present a reflection of their experiences.

11 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 6th December 2017
Wednesday 28th February 2018

All meetings to start at 6pm

The Meeting ended at 7.42 pm

Chairman

Minute Annex

Bromley SACRE Self Evaluation July 2017 results

Key Area		Developing	Established	Advanced
Standards and Quality of Provision of RE				
1A	RE provision across the LA		x	
1B	Standards and achievement		x	
1C	Quality of learning and teaching		x	
1D	Quality of leadership and management		x	
1E	Recruitment and retention of skilled specialist RE staff		x	
1F	Relations with academies and other non-LA maintained schools			x
The effectiveness of the locally Agreed Syllabus				
2A	Review of the Agreed Syllabus		x	
2B	The quality of the Agreed Syllabus		x	
2C	Launching and implementing the Agreed Syllabus	x		
2D	Membership and training of the Agreed Syllabus Conference		x	
2E	Developing the revised agreed syllabus		x	
2F	Making best use of National Guidance		x	
Collective Worship				
3A	Supporting pupil entitlement in LA's schools		x	
3B	Enhancing the quality of provision of collective worship		x	
3C	Responding to requests for determinations		x	
Management of SACRE				
4A	How purposeful, inclusive, representative and effective are SACRE meetings?		x	
4B	Membership and Training		x	
4C	Improvement/development planning		x	
4D	Professional and financial support	x		
4E	How well informed is SACRE to be able to advise the LA appropriately?	x		
4F	Partnerships with key stakeholders		x	
4G	Relations with the Academies sector		x	
Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community				
5A	Representative nature of SACRE in the local community			x
5B	SACRE's understanding of the local community in its religious, cultural and ethnic dimensions		x	
5C	SACRE's engagement with the community cohesion agenda	x		
5D	SACRE's Links to LA initiatives promoting community cohesion	x		

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