

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the virtual meeting held at 6.00 pm on 13 July 2022

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Jonathan Andrews, Graeme Casey,
David Jefferys and Kate Lymer
Reverend Rachel Archer, Ms Jan Thompson,
Mr Christopher Town, Mrs Denise Angell, Mr Lee Kings,
Mrs Katie Burtonshaw, Ms Deborah Corcoran,
Mr Saiyed Mahmood and Dr Omar Taha

Also Present:

Julia Andrew, LBB Head of School Standards
Carol Arnfield, LBB Head of Service for Early Years,
Schools Standards and Adult Education
Stacey Burman, SACRE RE Adviser

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Reverend Roger Bristow be elected as Chairman, and Deborah Corcoran be elected as Vice-Chairman, of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the 2022/2023 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, which was held virtually via Teams.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jessica Arnold, Councillor Robert Evans, Councillor Chris Price, Ms Hannah Arnold, Ms Vicki Ashmore, Mr Daniel Coleman, Mrs Dorothy Lampert, Mr Arvinder Nandra and Ms Caroline Ringham.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Graeme Casey declared that he worked at Tubbenden Primary School.

4 COMPLIANCE OF THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

No breaches of the GDPR were reported.

5 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD FEBRUARY 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

B) MATTERS ARISING

Minute 29b: Matters Arising

It was noted that information on attendance at the primary and secondary network meetings had been circulated to SACRE Members following the last meeting.

Minute 32: Inter-faith Competition

The Chairman advised that the inter-faith competition would be discussed under agenda item 12.

Minute 33: Draft Bromley SACRE Annual Report 2020-2021 (including SACRE Self-Evaluation)

The Chairman advised Members that the final version of the Bromley SACRE Annual Report 2020-2021 had been submitted to NASACRE and the Department for Education (DfE), and would be presented to Full Council on 18th July 2022.

The LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education advised that SACRE Members had requested information relating to the annual expenditure for the SACRE. During the 2021-2022 financial year, direct expenditure totalled £13,800, which included the time of the SACRE RE Adviser, production of the calendar and cost of representatives attending the NASACRE conference and AGM. It was noted that this figure did not include the time of officers in Democratic Services and School Standards.

The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that this information had been requested by SACRE Members following the publication of a report by NASACRE and the DfE, looking at the sourcing and funding of SACREs. The DfE recommended that 2% of the Central Services School Block (CSSB) funding received by Local Authorities be allocated to SACRE in order for their statutory duties to be carried out, and 1% as a minimum. It was highlighted that, based on the figures provided, Bromley SACRE definitely received more than 1% of the funding, and was likely to be nearer 2%. The Chairman and SACRE RE Adviser expressed their gratitude for the funding that was provided to the SACRE.

The LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education noted that during 2021-2022, Bromley SACRE had also benefitted from a Westhill/NASACRE Award, and the grant had been used to support the work around the interfaith dialogue conferences.

Minute 35: Best Practice Paper for Guest Speakers

The LBB Head of School Standards confirmed that the best practice paper for guest speakers had been uploaded to the Bromley Education Matters website.

6 REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

No determinations had been received.

7 NASACRE CONFERENCE AND AGM

The Chairman advised that the NASACRE conference and AGM, attended by the SACRE RE Adviser and himself, had originally been scheduled to be held in-person in Birmingham on Monday 23rd May 2022, however it was moved online. The theme of the conference had been 'ambitious SACREs'. The first key address had been received from Ed Pawson, Vice Chair – Religious Education Council (REC) on 'working together for high quality education in religion and worldviews'.

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that the second key address, delivered by Dr Richard Kueh, had focused on 'the substance of the curriculum: high-quality RE and Ofsted's inspection frameworks'. The SACRE RE Adviser reassured Members that the key elements highlighted were the three types of knowledge and the importance of being scholarly, both of which were supported by the Bromley Agreed RE Syllabus. The latter was also addressed in the training that the SACRE RE Adviser had been delivering to teachers.

The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that one session of the conference had involved discussions around the DfE investigation into funding – a project was underway to distil this information into a report, but this had not yet been released. The plan was for information to be provided to NASACRE, who would then compile a report to present to the DfE, recommending that they write to individual Local Authorities that were not providing SACREs with the minimum of 1% funding from the Central Services School Block (CSSB).

The Chairman advised that there had been break-out sessions during the day, which had been extremely valuable. The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that a programme of virtual workshops had been held following the conference. It was noted that the 'supporting RE teachers with enhanced subject knowledge' workshop had been interesting, as the strategies presented were similar to those used for the Bromley interfaith dialogue conferences. Another suggestion shared had been to deliver talks in various

places of worship – this was something that the Bromley teacher networks had started to undertake, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and could be reinstated in the future. The Chairman advised that he had attended the workshop on the ‘Still Standing’ report, a copy of which can be accessed via the following link: <https://nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/1-58-final-still-standing.pdf>

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that NASACRE had written a summary of the conference and AGM, a copy of which is attached at Appendix A.

8 DIGEST OF OFSTED REPORTS

The Chairman reminded SACRE Members that they had previously requested that a digest of Ofsted reports be provided to the meetings.

The LBB Head of School Standards advised that she monitored every Ofsted report received by the Local Authority, but none had referred to Religious Education.

9 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

SACRE Members had been provided with links to the following documents:

a DfE WHITE PAPER ON EDUCATION

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that she hoped to attend a session being held by NASACRE in November 2022 to continue the conversation around the government’s White Paper on education, and consider possible ways forward for SACREs.

One of the main emphasises of the White Paper was an increased push for schools to become part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and devolving responsibility from Local Authorities, both of which could have implications for SACREs. It was noted that if Ofsted-controlled teacher hubs were created, which would be supported by Oak National Academy, there were concerns regarding teachers’ Continuous Professional Development (CPD), as well as the place of Local Authorities in supporting this work in their own boroughs as funding may be cut. There was a focus on core subjects in the Paper, such as literacy and maths, and there were further concerns that the subjects in the wider curriculum were not referenced.

The Chairman noted that an Education Bill had also been introduced prior to the White Paper, and some of the contentious issues had now been amended.

A Member noted that the RE Report Card stated that 34% of academies did not have any RE timetabled and church schools were concerned that if they

were the minority within a MAT they may be unable to retain their religious character.

b DRAFT HANDBOOK - RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS IN THE CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING A WORLDVIEWS APPROACH (RE COUNCIL OF ENGLAND AND WALES)

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that this had been the focus of one of the key note speeches at the NASACRE conference and AGM. A core report had been published a few years previously, which made a recommendation for a 'national entitlement statement'. This was to provide a definition of what all pupils, in all schools across the country, should have access to when learning about RE. Part of the national entitlement had included a change in the name from 'Religious Education' to 'Religions and worldviews'. There had also been a change in the teaching approach, which informed the way that pupils investigated religions or worldviews, and this had been reflected in the Bromley Agreed RE Syllabus.

It was highlighted that if the power of SACREs decreased, this would increase the need for a 'national entitlement statement'. The aim of the project was to create examples of what the religions and worldviews approach could look like. There had been a national bidding campaign to create a framework, and the SACRE RE Adviser noted that she was a member of one of the successful groups.

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that the Handbook was currently still in draft form – there had been some concerns raised with regards to the content not reflecting all worldviews, and therefore changes were likely to be made. In terms of timescales, research would need to be undertaken and the draft framework written by autumn 2022. This would be piloted from January 2023, with feedback collated and reported back to the REC in the summer term 2023, which would impact on the revisions to the Handbook.

A Member noted that they had found the Handbook extremely helpful in putting the worldviews approach into perspective. It was questioned if a change in primary legislation was needed as the Education Reform Act 1988 still referred to principle religions, rather than wider worldviews, and if this would impact examination courses, which were again based on religions. The SACRE RE Adviser said the proposed recommendation was for the 'national entitlement statement' to replace the current legislation. The Education Reform Act 1988 had been amended according to the Equalities Act in 2010, which stated that 'religions' included non-religious worldviews. With regards to the examinations, there had been criticism following Ofsted's subject review in May 2021 that the three types of knowledge and worldviews approach promoted were not currently being addressed within the exam syllabi. Members were advised that Ofqual dictated what the examination boards were required to include, which meant that exam writers were constrained – currently this still related to the traditional approach of what pupils knew about religions and worldviews, and what could be learnt from them. This did not necessarily reflect the worldview approach which not only encouraged pupils

to use their personal knowledge or worldview, to understand that of others, but also strengthened their disciplinary or scholarly skills.

c RE REPORT CARD LAUNCH

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that the RE Report Card brought together statistics and information received by NASACRE, and linked with the earlier discussions around funding for SACREs and the DfE recommendations. It was highlighted that, despite the lack of funding and initial support for trainee teachers, this report card showed pupils were doing extremely well in their exams, and the number of pupils taking RE had increased. The RE Report Card was being used to promote the subject and lobby for more funding, and there was a letter available on the website that could be completed and submitted to MP's.

A Member noted the statement made in the Report regarding government performance, with £0 having been spent on RE projects between 2016-2021 compared to £387m spent on music projects during the same period. The SACRE RE Adviser agreed that there was a huge difference in the project spends, and that RE seemed to be at the bottom of the table.

10 SACRE SELF-EVALUATION

The Chairman advised that the self-evaluation of the SACRE was a continuous process, which informed the development of the Committee and the Annual Report to the DfE each year.

It was agreed that Members would follow the same process used in previous years, and confer with other representatives from their respective groups. It was suggested that:

- Group A members (representatives of other faiths and Christian denominations) look at *section 5 – contributing to cohesion across the community and the promotion of social and racial harmony.*
- Group B members (the Church of England) look at *section 4 – promoting improvement in the provision and quality of collective worship.*
- Group C members (teachers) look at *section 3 – evaluating the effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus.*
- Group D members (Councillors) look at *section 1 – management of the SACRE and building the partnership between the SACRE, the LA and other key stakeholders.*

The SACRE RE Adviser said that she would draft some guidance which could be circulated to Members, with a copy of the self-evaluation document, following the meeting.

ACTION: SACRE RE Adviser / Clerk

have to relate to religious scriptures, and all representatives could respond regarding how they interpreted their meaning.

The SACRE RE Adviser said that she had been involved in a project with a national organisation looking at how SACREs could increase their engagement and collaboration with parents, in addition to schools and local faith groups. One idea considered for the project would be the modelling of parents being invited to scriptural reading sessions. Another was that the Bromley best practice guidance for guest speakers could be built upon, with training developed for SACRE Members and parents to support and enhance their engagement and success in contributions to pupils' learning when visiting schools. Teacher representatives agreed that it would be a good idea to involve parents. In response to a question, the SACRE RE Adviser said that this would not be limited to just parents or legal guardians and could include wider family members – the aim would be to build bridges and encourage a good level of engagement from them.

12 INTER-FAITH CALENDAR COMPETITION

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that the number of schools involved, and entries received, for the calendar competition had reduced this year, which was thought to be due to the impact of COVID-19. The schools had been notified of the winners and certificates had been provided.

The LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education advised that, as the SACRE RE Adviser now worked directly for the Local Authority, the production of the calendar could be kept in house. The calendar was currently with the design team, who had worked on the Bromley Agreed RE Syllabus, and it was anticipated that it would be available by the end of the summer. In response to questions, the LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education advised that, once finalised, the calendar would be made freely available to download from the Bromley Education Matters website. With regards to the Bromley Council website, it was noted that the new website was being launched and a number of areas were still under development – once the calendar was published a link to access it from the Bromley Education Matters website could be added.

ACTION: LBB Head of School Standards

13 SACRE ACTION PLAN (INCLUDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS)

The SACRE RE Adviser had provided Members with an updated SACRE Action Plan for the period September 2021-September 2022. The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that the majority of actions were marked in green as 'complete', other than the actions relating to the Interfaith Dialogue Conference which were discussed earlier in the meeting. Members were advised that this year a survey had been sent to all primary and secondary schools, feedback from which could be provided.

With regards to the next academic year, the SACRE RE Adviser noted that the primary and secondary teacher networks would continue, and would be looking at the Bromley Agreed RE Syllabus. As agreed, the second Interfaith Dialogue Conference would be held during August. In response to a question, the SACRE RE Adviser said that once the conference clips were published, an item would be included on the following year's action plan to gauge their use. The LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education advised that it would be possible to run a report to see how many 'hits' the SACRE pages of the Bromley Education Matters website had received, and the Chairman noted that YouTube also counted how many views each video had. A Member noted that some schools may have issues accessing the videos via YouTube. The LBB Head of School Standards said that accessing the videos could be trialled with the RE leads through the teacher networks, and other ways around this could be investigated.

RESOLVED that the SACRE Action Plan be noted.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that a request to move the start time of the SACRE meetings had been received from a Member. It was noted that 6.00pm had been agreed as a compromise to allow teachers to attend after school, and Councillors to attend later meetings if scheduled on the same evening.

The Chairman said that the two SACRE meetings during the current municipal year would remain with a start time of 6.00pm, as published in the Council programme of meetings, but could be reconsidered going forward. The SACRE RE Adviser noted that if the SACRE returned to holding in-person meetings, this may have an impact on the agreed start time.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.00pm, Wednesday 9th November 2022

6.00pm, Wednesday 1st March 2023

The Meeting ended at 7.17 pm

Chairman

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About 150 delegates from SACREs across the country met for the NASACRE AGM and conference held online for the second time. The conference was opened by Linda Rudge, chair of NASACRE, welcoming delegates and celebrating the continued and varied work of SACREs and NASACRE over the last two years. She set the context for the title 'Ambitious SACREs', pointing out that ambition can be 'admirable or unrealistic'. SACREs need to aim for admirable, and SACREs are still standing, not standing still. The ['Still Standing' report](#) is available to download from the [NASACRE website](#).

The first two presentations and discussions focused on Religion and Worldviews as well as the substance of the curriculum. The third was an analysis of SACRE reports submitted to NASACRE and the DfE. There were three keynote speakers, and each was followed by time in breakout rooms discussing what had been heard.

The first keynote speaker was Ed Pawson, the Vice Chair of the REC. He shared the new vision for the Religious Education Council that *'Every young person experiences an academically rigorous and personally inspiring education in religion and worldviews.'* The role of the REC is to campaign and advocate for good RE. It is a group with representatives from over 60 religious and non-religious groups. He also talked about the recent publication of a Draft Handbook on Religion and Worldviews, which is available [here](#). SACREs need to engage in the discussion about religion and worldviews.

Dr Richard Kueh (HMI) raised the challenge to SACREs about how they can support scholarly RE. He reiterated many of the key points raised in the Ofsted RE Research Review, published in May 2021. On the selection of content for a syllabus, he suggested that including a greater number of religions and non-religious worldviews did not guarantee a high quality of RE and that is an essential component of the discussion around syllabus design. Ambitious end goals, that reflect the scholarly nature of RE, are needed. A subject report on RE from Ofsted will be published this summer.

Just after lunch, the winners of this year's Westhill Awards were announced and Bristol, Leicester and Luton were successful. NASACRE and Westhill were disappointed by the low number of applicants and SACREs are urged to consider making a bid. If you need inspiration, remember that three of the June workshops will showcase last year's winners. There is also a recording of how to apply for an award in the online training section of the [NASACRE website](#).

Dr David Hampshire, former chair of NASACRE, presented his initial findings of the analysis of SACRE annual reports. The final report will be on the website and circulated to SACREs later this term. The key findings make for interesting reading, raising many questions that SACREs may wish to discuss. For example, resources made available to SACREs are very variable and the level of financial support had an impact on the effectiveness of SACREs. He focused on the fact that the primary function of a SACRE is to advise the Local Authority on RE and collective worship, and only a minority of SACREs reported that they had done that. NASACRE is in discussion with the DfE about the findings of report and further advice and training will likely be forthcoming.

The business meeting was short and as no nominations had been received for vacancies on the Exec, other than the formal appointment of Saquat Ali as Treasurer and the reappointment of Sue Holmes as Secretary, the Chair expressed the need for more people with the right skills to be nominated by SACREs to work with the Executive committee to help with challenges raised by the White Paper. After the business meeting, for which all the reports are available on the [NASACRE website](#), Webmaster Matthew Tullett gave delegates an overview of the new website, which was launched at the conference. The new site should be easier to use, more streamlined, with a better search function and aimed to work better on mobile devices. SACREs using the new website are asked to contact NASACRE if they experience any difficulties.

During her closing remarks, NASACRE Chair, Linda Rudge, thanked retiring Executive members Alex Klein and Roy Galley for their work. It was also time to say farewell to our Treasurer, Michael Metcalf, after 29 years and welcome Saquat Ali to the role.

As they left, delegates posted comments in the Chat, such as:

Such a lot of supportive information and discussion. A day full of brilliant insight and interest.

Many thanks to all the Exec for an excellent and informative conference. Making the absolute best out of having to make it all happen on ZOOM.

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