

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 19 October 2011

Present:

Martin Sweet (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Anne Manning (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Reg Adams, Councillor Roger Charsley
Reverend Canon Camp, Mrs Colling, Mrs Fane,
Mrs Hawkes, Mr Hagley, Mr Mahmood,
Mrs Polydorou, Mr Stone, Mrs Thompson,
Mrs Tranchina and Reverend Varney

Also Present:

Mrs Penny Smith-Orr	RE Adviser
Beverley Johnston	Head of Education Commissioning and Business Services
Virginia Corbyn	Diocesan RE Adviser
Suhaib Farooqi	Activities Co-ordinator from Discover Islam
Christine Reeks	Clerk to SACRE

12 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Mr M Sweet be elected as Chairman and Councillor Mrs Anne Manning be elected as Vice-Chairman of SACRE for the 2011/12 academic year.

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Members of SACRE introduced themselves, and the Chairman welcomed Virginia Corbyn, (Diocesan RE Adviser) and Suhaib Farooqi (from Discover Islam) to the meeting. Beverley Johnston, Head of Education Commissioning and Business Services attended the meeting as the Lead Officer for SACRE from the CYP Department, following Dr George Searle's retirement.

Mrs Polydorou, the Rev Canon Michael Camp and the Rev Varney left the meeting early due to other commitments.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Norrie, Mr Gupta, Ms Honey, Ms James, Mr Riat and Mr Town.

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

15 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MAY 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 25th May 2011 be confirmed subject to the following amendment:

Minute 4e) School Visits: Amend "Kevin Gerrard" to read "Kevin Gerred".

B) MATTERS ARISING:

Minute 3B

Item 4f the Chairman would invite Bob Stewart, MP for Beckenham Constituency to attend the next meeting of SACRE on 1st February 2012. Councillor Adams pointed out that there were in fact four local Members of Parliament and not three; the fourth MP being Jim Dowd, Member of Parliament for Lewisham West and Penge.

Minute 4a

The RE Adviser confirmed that by law academies still have to provide religious education, and although they have to follow a syllabus it does not have to be one which is agreed locally. There had not yet been any further statement from the Government regarding the matter. The Chairman commented that John Keast, Chair of the Religious Education Council had indicated that there was not going to be any further announcements. The Chairman understood that academies were bound by funding agreements and could choose whether or not to provide RE. The Head of Education Commissioning and Business Services commented that she was surprised if academies would be allowed to opt out.

Minute 8

Unfortunately it had been necessary to postpone the training event for the SACRE Faith Directory, due to take place on the 14th June 2011 as little interest had been shown. Fiona Hawkes said that she had contact with the Christian group 'Youth for Christ' who might be interested and could let the RE Adviser have their details. The RE Adviser commented that it was hoped volunteers from other faith group would put themselves forward to offer to speak in schools. Jackie Tranchina remarked that when she had worked at St Paul's Cray School, someone from the Jewish faith and also missionaries had visited the school. The Chairman asked if she would pass their details to the RE Adviser. Mr Mahmood suggested that more notice of the training date should be given. **The RE Adviser agreed to contact the SACRE clerk to book a future date for the training of volunteers to take place.**

Appendix

The Chairman encouraged Members to read the notes from the NASACRE Annual Conference which had been appended to the minutes. He stressed the importance of SACREs being more positive and pro-active. In order to benefit children it was essential that a cohesive and good structured approach to RE be adopted.

16 ORAL UPDATE AND PUBLICATIONS

a) The Future of RE

The RE Adviser informed the meeting that it had been confirmed RE was not included in the English Baccalaureate. The Minister for Education had commented that “all schools were doing RE anyway”, although it was known that this was actually not the case. The Association of RE Advisers had asked a representative of the Department of Education if all Head Teachers and Governing Bodies could be written to, confirming that the teaching of RE is statutory. However, at the Annual London SACRE’s meeting the previous week John Keast, Chair of the Religious Education Council had commented that the Government would not write to schools to tell them what to do. The RE Adviser had recently attended a weekend event with teachers and others involved in RE. It had been suggested that there should be “one voice” talking to the Government about the future of RE, and that this should be the RE Council who represent the collective interests of a wide variety of professional associations and faith communities. The synopsis of the weekend event was awaited. The RE Adviser commented that when attending the weekend she was surprised to discover that there were a lot of teachers who had not heard of SACREs and who did not know about the RE Council. (This might be due to the fact that their Local Authorities did not have an RE Adviser.) However, this was not the case with LB Bromley as all RE teachers were aware of Bromley SACRE.

Councillor Manning suggested that if the Government are unwilling to write to schools confirming that RE is a statutory function, perhaps this was something that the Children and Young People Portfolio Holder or Director of Children and Young People Services at LB Bromley should do.

b) London SACREs Event - Annual Meeting of the London and South East SACREs

This had taken place on 13th October 2011 at the Lewisham Sri Lankan Hindu Temple. The Rev Canon Michael Camp, Mrs Colling and Mr Riat had attended, together with the Chairman and RE Adviser. The Chairman commented that it had been emphasised children were experiencing more diversity than at any other time. It was essential that each child was taken beyond their tolerance level to one which respected the beliefs of others. (See the report of the meeting appended to these minutes.) Education was changing dynamically and it was important for SACREs to think proactively.

Reverend Canon Michael Camp remarked that one of the important things arising from the meeting was the challenge that it was up to the RE community to ensure the promotion of good Religious Education. Jackie Tranchina commented that there was a lot of “clustering” going on with schools being encouraged to join and work together. She had recently been appointed as Head Teacher at Cudham C of E Primary School and worked closely with other primary schools and the secondary school in her locality.

Councillor Charsley asked if the Archbishops were concerned about the teaching of RE. Reverend Canon Camp said that the Archbishop of Canterbury was very much aware but unfortunately was unable to affect Government Policy.

c) Islamic Competition 2011

Members were reminded that the next Islamic Competition would be held at Darul Uloom between 7–9pm on 24th November 2011. All Members were invited and if they wished to attend were asked to email Mr Mahmood to let him know and he would let them have details of the dress code. Mr Mahmood said that an enormous amount of effort was being put into the event. There were three schools attending: Coopers Technology College, Bullers Wood and Langley Park School for Boys. It was noted that Bishop Justus School had expressed an interest in attending the Islamic Competition in future.

The RE Adviser remarked that it would be an excellent evening and it was well worth hearing and seeing what the children had done. Mr Stone said that he had had positive feedback from parents following previous Islamic Competitions and they had been very appreciative. The Chairman thanked Mr Mahmood for organising the event which was much appreciated and valued.

(Mrs Polydorou left after consideration of this item.)

d) Progress on Bromley Agreed Syllabus

Unfortunately it had not yet been possible to set up the working group to discuss the process of the forthcoming review of the Bromley Agreed Syllabus. The RE Adviser asked if there was any budget available for a syllabus review and was told by the Head of Education Commissioning and Business Services that there was no specific budget for SACRE but it came within her overall budget and was approximately £14,000 - £15,000 (this included the 35 days RE Adviser support). Beverley Johnston suggested that she liaise with the Chairman and RE Adviser to ensure that the SACRE Development Plan met with the budget. It was pointed out that the SACRE Development Plan did not coincide with the financial year, as it ran from January to December. Councillor Adams suggested that perhaps it might be helpful to have a fifteen month Development Plan ending in March 2013.

RESOLVED that the Chairman and RE Adviser meet with the Head of Education Commissioning and Business Services to discuss the SACRE Development Plan and budget.

(Reverend Varney left after consideration of this item)

e) Sikh Open Day 5th June 2011

At the previous meeting Mr Riat had invited members of SACRE to an open day at the Sikh Gurdwara on the 5th June 2011. Unfortunately Mr Riat was unable to attend the SACRE meeting to give an update on the event.

f) SACRE Annual Report for 2010-2011

The RE Adviser had requested details of the GCSE results and when these were received would incorporate them into the SACRE Annual Report for 2010-2011. In previous years the annual report had been sent to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency but this had now been disbanded. The QCDA used to provide a national analysis of SACRE reports, and was a way of helping SACREs to evaluate themselves. The RE Adviser commented that NASACRE had asked for the annual reports to be sent to them in future and they hoped to be able to find someone to analyse these. It was noted that once the SACRE annual report had been completed it would be cleared by the Chairman before being circulated to the Department of Education, Bromley Schools and SACRE Members.

**17 SACRE MEMBERS TRAINING
Report No. DCYP11109**

At their meeting on 25th May 2011 SACRE Members considered the questions "What does quality RE look like?" and "What do we want pupils to gain from their experience of RE?" SACRE Members considered a table of the results and a short analysis of Members' comments which had been prepared by the RE Adviser.

The Chairman introduced Mr Suhaib Farooqi, Activities Co-ordinator from Discover Islam to the meeting. Mr Farooqi gave a presentation to SACRE Members of the work carried out by his educational organisation which provides Islamic informative media, exhibitions, presentations, workshops and literature to promote a better understanding of Islam. Discover Islam give guidance on syllabus content and specific topic content e.g Ramadan. They organise Introduction to Islam and Culture Courses, Cultural Exhibitions for schools and provide access to mosques for visits and tours.

SACRE Members were also shown the first in a series of Cartoon Animations for Primary Schools which explained the five pillars of Islam. (*The animation can be seen on 'youtube'.*). All the services provided by Discover Islam are free and details can be found on www.discoverislam.co.uk. Mr Farooqi informed SACRE Members that Discover Islam started in South West London and their work now covered the whole of the UK. There were plans to extend their work into France and Germany.

Mr Mahmood suggested that Discover Islam could be a useful resource for schools and Mr Stone commented that pupils would benefit from having a simplified resource, such as the cartoon animation. Mr Farooqi added that it was also a good resource for adults who did not know very much about Islam.

The Chairman thanked Mr Farooqi for attending the meeting and for his interesting and informative presentation. He then introduced Mrs Jackie Tranchina, the recently appointed Head Teacher at Cudham C of E Primary School (*and also a Member of SACRE*), who gave a powerpoint presentation to SACRE Members of good RE practice in her school.

Mrs Tranchina commented that the Primary School Curriculum gave guidance on teaching all religions, not just Christianity. Her presentation showed work recently undertaken by the reception class in respect of harvest, which had looked at Autumn foods and colours. There had been a lot of practical work involved, including art activities and plenty of opportunity for speaking and listening. The children had been involved in Christian harvest songs and prayers.

(Reverend Canon Camp had to leave the meeting at this point.)

Year 1 pupils had looked at the Jewish festival of Sukkot and had compared how Christians celebrate. Pupils had looked at the Festival of Light and Diwali. They had explored symbolism and looked at aspects of sharing across all religions. Year 5 pupils had also examined Judaism, and Mrs Tranchina brought in some models of sukkahs which the children had made. The more able children had researched how Jewish people celebrate harvest and were able to compare this to Christian celebrations.

Mrs Tranchina commented that one of the most successful lessons she had taught in the past was teaching Year 4 pupils about Islam. The children had really enjoyed this and one of the pupils had brought in her prayer mat. Mrs Tranchina remarked that she considered the cartoon animation produced by Discover Islam was a very good resource.

The Chairman remarked that newly qualified teachers received very little training in Religious Education and asked what could be done to help them. Mrs Tranchina commented that it could be very daunting for new teachers and some were worried that they might "say the wrong thing". It was important to share good practice and for experienced teachers to support them. Jan Thompson agreed that it was very important to give support to new teachers. She said that there were tremendous resources available to them and the Bromley Scheme of Work gave teachers lots of support in delivering the Agreed Syllabus. The Chairman remarked in particular on resources available through information technology, as long as it was accessed through secure sites. Jan Thompson commented on the importance of planning appropriately in relation to pupils' age and ability.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the analysis of the previous training exercise and the presentations of Mr Farooqi and Mrs Tranchina be noted;**
- (ii) Mrs Fiona Hawkes to speak at the next SACRE meeting about good RE practice in the classroom.**

18 SACRE ANNUAL EVENT 2011
Report No. DCYP11111

Following the SACRE meeting of 25th May 2011, discussions took place between the RE Adviser and Mrs Hawkes from Coopers Technology College regarding the annual event for 2011. It was decided that another pupil conference should be held to encourage pupils to join the Youth SACRE now that the original members had left school. The conference which was open to pupils from Year 10 upwards was scheduled to be held on 4th October 2011 at Coopers Technology College. Unfortunately however it proved necessary for the conference to be cancelled as it was difficult for teachers to bring pupils out of school and also Coopers have a very strict policy on needing exact information on visitors during school time. A few of the schools had students who were interested and it was decided to invite these to Coopers for an after school meeting instead of an all morning conference.

The Chairman asked if the event would be rescheduled for this academic year but the RE Adviser did not think this would be possible as the impetus would be lost if we waited too long. Members commented on the excellent work which had been undertaken by the previous Youth SACRE and considered that it would be a shame not to continue with this. The RE Adviser commented that the Youth SACRE would not have existed without the support and help of Mrs Hawkes and also Jed Stone. SACRE Members expressed their appreciation for the work which they had undertaken in this regard.

RESOLVED that students would be invited to a meeting of the new Youth SACRE on 18th November 2011 at Coopers Technology College from 3.30pm to 5pm.

19 SACRE VISITS TO SCHOOLS
Report No. DCYP11110

The Chairman, RE Adviser, Councillor Manning and Reverend Varney had visited Princes Plain Primary School on 17th May 2011 and the RE Adviser commented on the successful visit which had taken place. The school visit showed excellent practice in RE and was a good example to others.

The RE Adviser commented that as suggested at the previous meeting she had spoken to Kevin Gerred, the Partnerships and Planning Officer regarding the programme of school visits for Councillors but he was unable to help with suggestions for any school SACRE visits.

Following discussion it was suggested that perhaps arrangements could be made to visit Raglan Primary School, Marian Vian Primary School and/or Charles Darwin Secondary School. The Chairman encouraged SACRE members to attend the SACRE school visits if at all possible. The RE Adviser would contact the schools concerned and notify the SACRE Clerk of dates for onward transmission to SACRE Members.

RESOLVED that the report of the school visit be noted and arrangements be made for visits to take place during the Autumn Term.

20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

21 DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 1st February 2012
Wednesday 30th May 2012

All meetings to start at 6.30pm

The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman

APPENDIX 1

London and SE SACRE (and Guernsey!) meeting
Fulfilling Our Responsibilities for RE and
Collective Worship in Uncertain Times.
13th October 2011

In our first session we noted the fact that there is an increasing diversity within society, with a wide range of both faith and culture. It is hoped that SACREs can 'reach out' into this diverse society. However, in order to do so, each SACRE will need to understand what diversity looks like.

We considered the fact that there may be inequalities in the composition of some SACREs. Do SACREs adequately represent their local community, or merely respond to what people suggest is their local community. How do we qualify or quantify people of 'no faith'?

There was some discussion about the process of co-opting 'minority' groups. The final statement on this issue was that the broad constitution of each SACRE was bound by law – and Bruce Gill (Chair of NASACRE) said that the government did not appear to have the stomach for changing primary legislation at this time.

Presentation by 'Face to Faith'

– presentation by Helen Harrison and Jo Malome

Face to Faith, is an innovative schools programme (part of the Tony Blair Foundation) for 12-17 year olds across 17 countries and growing. It aims to connect students worldwide via emerging technologies, such as facilitated video-conferences and a secure website. Together students discuss global issues from a variety of faith and belief perspectives. They gain the dialogue skills required to prevent conflict by breaking down religious and cultural stereotypes and promote religious literacy among young people from different nations and religious traditions.

Their main theme is based around the idea to 'getting to know you'.

Jo and Helen lead a practical session which generated some interesting and beneficial insights.

In conclusion, the meeting identified that children are experiencing more diversity than at any other time in history. Part of the role of education (and RE) will be to teach them to be 'global citizens', living beyond mere tolerance towards the capacity for celebration of their own beliefs and those of others.

RE in an uncertain world: John Keast
(notes taken directly from John's PowerPoint)

A critical but not fatal situation for RE in 2011:

- Academies and free schools
- Ofsted
- LAs and SACREs
- Initial Teacher Training
- The review of the National Curriculum
- The English Baccalaureate
- national RE adviser
- The government

Positive things to remember

- An essential and unique contribution
- The legal requirement
- Taught by regular, trained teachers
- Quality and commitment of RE teachers
- The public examinations system
- The RE community
- Overt swell of support for RE
- Europe

So opportunity and challenge

- Education changing
- Change for a diverse RE Community
- Look forward not back
- Look to itself more confidently
- Work together

Strategic agenda for next five years

- RE rationale, curriculum, assessment & qualifications
- RE Professional Development and Resources
- Public understanding of RE
- Structures for RE

RE Council - role

- A national forum
- A clear national voice
- Influence policy
- Promote a positive image and public understanding of RE
- Represent collective interests

RE Council - strategic plan

- To promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment in RE
- To influence development of public policy on and understanding of RE
- To promote a coherent professional development strategy for RE
- To secure adequate and sustainable resources for the REC
- To review the structures and operation of the REC

Conclusion

- Time for leadership
- Time for change
- Time for working together

Basically John Keast's message is that the current situation presents a challenge which the RE community must grasp. Increasing diversity and competition in school provision are bound to weaken the position of RE and Government has made it clear that it has no intention of giving it the support that we would like to see. What he calls "The RE Community" must take responsibility for it. It is in our hands to identify the future role and shape of RE and if it is to fulfil the crucial role we believe it has we must be the ones to make it work. No-one else is going to do so.

Discussion about Collective Worship

Recent BBC survey suggests that most parents do not know about a collective worship policy, nor did they want one. They also concluded that the statutory nature of collective worship did not really mean anything.

In simple terms:

- 80% of primary schools do comply with legislation
- 80% of secondary schools do not comply with legislation

No legal change is likely, we need to live with dichotomy, especially as there seems 'no position to move to'

Key issues:

- There is a real need for guidance
- Consideration of the process of exploiting the current flexibility
- Schools need support and resources
- How does a SACRE make it work?

Martin Sweet

Wednesday, 19 October 2011

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