

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: **Standard Advisory Committee for Religious Education**

Date: **2 February 2010**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

TITLE: SACRE ANNUAL EVENT 2009 - YOUTH SACRE

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Chief Officer: Gillian Pearson, Director of Children and Young People Services

Ward: N/A

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The annual event held in October 2009 was a successful sixth form conference which was attended by 54 students and funded by the NASACRE/Westhill Trust awards.
- 1.2 A number of students expressed an interest in being part of a Youth SACRE. Some of the students were going to pass on the information to other pupils.
- 1.3 A meeting for the interested students has been set up for this term. It is hoped that there will be representations from this group at the summer meeting of SACRE.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **Members to read and note the report of the conference which has been prepared for the NASACRE/ Westhill Trust.**

Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Report: Sixth Form Conference – October 2009
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Report of the
Bromley Sixth Form Conference

21st October 2009

At Bromley EDC

Penny Smith-Orr
RE Consultant Bromley SACRE

Background:

Members of Bromley SACRE decided that in order to highlight the work of SACRE to schools, pupils and the wider community and become a more proactive group it would be a good idea to start a Youth SACRE. The annual SACRE budget did not allow for holding the sort of conference that was envisaged and so a bid was put in to the NASACRE/Westhill Trust awards for that year. The original proposal can be seen below and we were pleased when we heard that we had been granted the full award.

Bromley SACRE Proposal for the NASACRE/Westhill Awards

Background:

Bromley SACRE has representatives from five of the six major faiths, missing a Buddhist rep. There are few places of worship for 'other' faith groups, making it difficult for schools to make visits to places of worship and to find visiting speakers. It is also a borough where the majority of people are generally deemed to be white Christian or of no faith. There is no interfaith forum in place. Bromley SACRE therefore feels it is very important for young people in Bromley schools to be made aware of the faith practices and issues related to people other than Christians. Over the next twenty years it is likely that the population will change and become more diverse and that issues will need to be addressed relating to community cohesion and diversity.

Proposal:

In order to alert the young people of Bromley to the need for an understanding of diversity we propose to hold a sixth form conference for pupils in year12.

The working title of the conference is 'Faith Numbers', taking the idea of the newly released film 'Numbers'.

The day will start with a montage of ideas from films which depict the future, i.e. Twelve Monkeys, Terminator etc. Groups of pupils will then make a list of the key issues they think will be important in this country in 25 years time, when they are in their forties.

The workings of a SACRE will be explained briefly and then faith representatives from Bromley SACRE will present their ideas on the issues for people of their own faith in 25 years time. For example, will faith be more or less of an issue, will society be more secularised or polarised into groups related to faith. What problems might there be, what do they fear etc.

The pupils will be able to ask questions and will then be asked to consider what the government/Bromley Council/Bromley SACRE should be doing now to make community cohesion a reality in the future and to improve interfaith relations in Bromley. These discussions will be facilitated by young people from the faith communities.

After feed back from this activity we will hold a mock SACRE meeting with selected pupils taking different roles and discussing an issue that needs to be addressed now. As a result of the conference we hope to be able to start a Youth SACRE for Bromley which would be able to work with the SACRE committee in future. During the day we will be looking for interested volunteers to be members of this.

The last activity will be to consider what hopes for the future of interfaith relations might be put into a time capsule to be opened in 25 years time.

Costs:

The venue for the conference will be the EDC in Bromley and Bromley SACRE members will be involved in the planning, the presentations and in finding youth members from their place of worship to facilitate the break out groups. A maximum of eighty pupil delegates will be involved with twenty adults bringing the number to one hundred. The cost of this day will be £400 for the venue plus £800 for refreshments including lunch. A cost of £60 will be put aside for thank you tokens for the youth facilitators. Money for materials will come to £40.

This comes to a total of £1300 for the day.

SACRE members will give their services free and the RE adviser's time will be covered as part of the work programme for the year. Any other costs will be covered by Bromley SACRE budget.

Once we had received the notification of the award the RE adviser, Penny Smith-Orr and the Chair of SACRE, Martin Sweet announced it to the members and organised a meeting with the secondary teacher representatives to work on making a day conference for Year 12 students.

The first meeting was at Bullers Wood School on 29 June 2009. At this meeting various ideas were put forward which would keep the interest of the students and although the spirit of the proposal did not change it was decided to make the theme concentrate more on working towards a cohesive society for the future which might be achieved if the 16 and 17 year olds of the present had an input into making decisions now.

It was decided to use the ward map of Bromley broken into small 'islands'. The main activity would be group work using scenarios made up by the teachers to decide how to organise rules and ways of living on the 'island'. These islands would then be joined together to make up a map of the borough of Bromley and discussions on how a larger area could be organised allowing for the fact that there are different groups with different needs, expectations, traditions and faiths involved.

The adviser sent out invitations and outlines of the day to all the seventeen secondary schools in the borough. A couple of schools were on half term and another problem we encountered was that the new system of 'rarely cover' started in September 2009 which meant that some teachers were unable to leave school for the day so were unable to bring pupils. Eventually seven schools took part with a final number of 55 students at the conference. The seven schools were; Bishop Justus C of E, Bullers Wood, Cator Park, Coopers, Newstead Wood, Priory and St Olaves.

The teachers volunteered to devise the scenarios for the island activity. It was decided to involve the faith representatives on the SACRE committee by asking them to produce information on the faith stance taken with regard to the scenarios.

Two short film presentations were organised by the adviser to show various different possible futures and encourage pupils to take part in the decision making process. One entitled 'At now, change the future' and the second, to be shown at the end of the day, entitled 'what could you change?' Also a short talk on the particular statistics of the London borough of Bromley was devised using the One Bromley website.

One teacher devised a starter activity and it was decided to colour code this activity so that the students would work in groups that were mixed rather than school groups. It was decided that the Chair of SACRE would lead a session on what a SACRE actually is and a series of questions on issues that SACRE has addressed was devised. During this session the students were to be invited to join a youth SACRE and given some information on what that would involve.

Various domestic arrangements also had to be negotiated. The conference was booked to take place at the Bromley Education Development Centre and included a free lunch for all those involved. In the space of time between the bid being accepted and the conference the costs of the venue and lunches went up. But this was solved by using only the hall and one room, rather than having several break out rooms, although this meant that it was rather noisy during the group work sessions.

The Conference

At the last moment two of the organising group of three teachers were unable to get out of school; however they were able to send students with another teacher. The third teacher was able to attend and presented the island session and feedback during the morning, while the adviser and the Chair of SACRE presented the afternoon sessions. In attendance, in addition to the participating students, were 9 accompanying teachers, the adviser, the diocesan adviser, the chair of SACRE and Tristram Jenkins from NASACRE. In the afternoon several members of the Bromley SACRE also attended and joined in the discussions on what a SACRE does and helped with the pupil activity on the sort of issues that arise in SACRE.

The following shows the finalised agenda for the conference which was entitled 'Knowing' with the idea that knowing helps you to make a difference. The first film session involved clips from 10 films showing various futures, some more sci-fi than others, and really engaged the student's interest.

Agenda

Aim:

- To understand the importance of decision making and forward planning in order to ensure a cohesive society in the future.
- To start a youth SACRE in Bromley

9.30 Registration and Starter Activity

10.0 Introductions

Short film 'Act Now, Change the Future'

discussion of ideas presented and reasons why planning for a cohesive society is important.

10.30 Pupils, in mixed groups, design way of life on an island starting with the moral code needed to live together in a cohesive society. Throughout the task pupils will be guided with scenarios helping them to consider religious, ethical and political issues.

12.0 Feedback from groups on decision making process, problems incurred and decisions made.

12.30 Lunch break (work will be displayed during lunch for use later on).

1.15 The importance of an overview and coherent policymaking.
Statistics of Bromley Borough- i.e. faith groups, languages, age demographics, wealth etc

What is SACRE?

An invitation to join a new Youth SACRE for Bromley and how it would work

1.35 Pupils Activity.

Questions that SACRE has had to consider, what would you do?

EG How do you decide which religions to teach? Can my child wear a religious symbols?, should RE be taught in schools?

How do you distinguish between magic and miracles?

2.05 Another short film; 'What could you change?'

Thinking and planning for the future, Pupils write an advice slip for their future self.

2.20 Round up of the day and Evaluations

The mixing of the students worked reasonably well and the feed back session on the work of how to devise rules for living was very lively and thought provoking. The different groups had come up with various ways to organise and to deal with the different scenarios. The questions were shown on a power point presentation with tabled information covering key religious beliefs, mainly provided by the faith representatives on the SACRE committee concerning each predicament. The students were told to make sure they read the faith information and listened to every group member's point of view before deciding on a solution.

The pupils used the faith information and their own ideas to come to the conclusions (Appendix 1) many of which were opposite views to another group. The feed back session was very lively with most of the students presenting the group ideas. Students were not afraid to give their opinions and to debate any challenge that occurred.

After lunch the islands were put together and the statistics of living and working in Bromley were presented. Students were encouraged to think of development on a larger scale and given statistics on population, life expectancy, employment and numbers of people in Bromley from each religious group and none.

Martin sweet then presented a session on what happens in a SACRE meeting and the students were invited to join the youth SACRE. They were then given a sheet with various questions of the type that SACRE has to deal with. (Appendix 2).

The answers to these were interesting and showed a lot of common sense. Some of these ideas will probably form the basis of discussions at the first meeting.

After this session the students were shown another film 'what could you change?' and then given the final which was to write a note to their future self. 'What should you remember, what needs to change, what needs to happen?' These were fixed up on the map for all to see and are written below:

Don't be afraid to speak your mind
I hope you are doing something worthwhile with your life, don't forget the
environment
Religions should be in harmony, people should be able to fly,
I should remember how great I am
I want to make there be world peace
Regardless of religion and race, 'all men are created equal'
Stay cool; live every day as your last
Recycle!
Work hard and don't give up
Decrease the number of people being killed by knife and gun crime. Decrease
the level of pollution
Knowledge is everything. Change; we need to become more cohesive; we
need start listening and give each other respect

Reduce pollution; don't take anything for granted
 Appreciate everyone and everything
 Recycle everything
 Football will become a proper religion
 In the future there will be no religion. Religion causes conflict! Without religion
 there would be less war and hopefully there will be flying cars
 Woo paganism
 I should remember where I was that day and how I survived. Something bad
 needs to happen to change everything
 The future is what we make it but we won't be there to suffer the
 consequences. Change- think of the next generation more!
 End third world debt
 Live each day as if it was your last
 Look forward try not to look back. Be positive not negative
 Remember it's ok to be happy and sad but try to stay positive. Don't be afraid
 to trust people. That's all you need to know.
 Note to self; don't trust technology, it hates you!
 Note to self; don't put too much trust in too many people. The way developing
 countries are treated. Better communication
 Don't take things for granted
 Live for today, not tomorrow
 Not to show off to other people and focus on yourself. Be more focused on
 your future.
 Don't be selfish
 To future, remember to live everyday as it comes. The way we treat the planet
 needs to change; we need to make this happen by understanding.
 Don't look back always look forward
 Stop using a car so much; walk to places
 People need to; learn to believe, care and communicate give and take.
 Believe in you, others, everything, no matter how ludicrous it may seem
 Find melody and tell her she is amazing and make the world hear her.
 Reach out in peace to people of other countries. Press for green political
 manifesto and vote for their candidates. Be constant in prayer.
 Live your life to the full.
 Note to self; work hard to gain what you want in life. Be less reliant on
 technology. Sustainable society; with less crime and conflict.
 End poverty

The students were then asked to evaluate the day and indicate whether they
 would like to join the youth SACRE, twenty five of the students said yes they
 would, Some of the students were going to go back to school and share the
 day with others and see if they would also like to join.
 The results of the evaluations are in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

The day took a lot of the RE consultants allocated time to organise and the cost was such that this could not be run again unless funding was sought from outside again in future. However if the day was to be repeated in a couple of years to encourage more students to join the youth SACRE it should be easier as the materials are all made. Thanks to Fiona Hawkes, Jed Stone and Alex Green from SACRE who gave their time so willingly. Working with the teachers on the SACRE committee was good and it was a shame that two of them could not get to the conference in the end and see the fruits of their work. The teachers who did come were very involved and worked well together and with the students to help make the day a success.

The students seemed to be appreciative of the day and were keen to articulate their opinions. Five students who did not have a teacher with them left at lunchtime.

It will be interesting to see whether the students do come to the first meeting of the Youth SACRE and whether the main committee will be able to assimilate their views in the future.

Looking at the evaluations it seems that the most enjoyable bit of the day was the lunch! The films were also highly rated although some students said they were scared by the possible futures they were shown. The Bromley statistics and the SACRE questions and answers had a mixed response but most students understood that they were there for the purpose of finding out about SACRE. Designing the island lifestyle was the most popular activity and comments showed that the students enjoyed interacting with new people as much as making the rules up. From the evaluations it seems as though we had a good mix of activities and that there was nothing so unpopular that we would remove it.

To finish, a quote from one of the evaluations sums up the spirit of the day;

'had a really interesting day, met loads of fantastic new people and opened my mind to new ideas!'

Thank You

Thanks to NASACRE/Westhill Trust for the funding and to Tristram Jenkins for his input. Thanks also to the teachers, other adults and SACRE members who accompanied the students and worked with them. Thanks to the staff at the EDC for their help and patience and to the catering staff for providing the lunch which got the most 5's in the evaluations. Thanks also to Ted Smith-Orr who made the islands and worked out how they would fit together and to Richard Rodgers who produced the two films, without which the day would not have been as stimulating.

Appendix 1

Scenario Questions and the group responses for activity 1:

Capital Punishment

Alex Meadows has moved in to your community with his wife Jane and their two sons, Adam who is three years old, and Peter who is seven in November.

You have recently discovered that as a boy that Alex Meadows was convicted of the torture and killing of a two year old toddler called Billy Smith in the 1980's, but due to his parents support he evaded prosecution and let his friend take the punishment and the blame.

How does your community deal with this?

- Yes in extreme cases such as a serial killer but is used mainly as a deterrent.
- Warnings/Chance to repent/ if no rehabilitation after 18 months instant death. Not the mentally unstable.
- Punishment to be the same as the crime and if you survive then you are forgiven.
- Prison for a year then if reformed can be released if not must be put to death. In favour of capital punishment.
- Punishment to fit the crime.
- Not killed but officially changed.
- Do not agree with capital punishment; put in prison and given counseling.
- No; lock in cages overnight.
- Life sentences of actual life time, otherwise you are also a murderer.

Abortion

Nancy Bennett is thirteen years old. Four months ago she was raped by a close friend of the family. She is now pregnant and even though she is a devout Catholic she desperately wants an abortion. She has written to the Pope and he has denied her permission to have an abortion, her family accepts his decision.

How does your community deal with this?

- Should speak to professional before abortion takes place. As she is Catholic abortion is against her religion so baby should be adopted as her parents might disown her if she has an abortion.
- Choice should be up to her, she should do what is best for her and not her religion.

- Abortion acceptable for her as she would be reminded of the rape and be emotionally damaged. This is the lesser of two evils.
- Abortion should be carried out in extreme circumstances only and not as a casual thing.
- Depends on situation but everyone should have the right to abortion. Life is sacred but everyone has their rights.
- Allow it but don't publicise it, give people the opportunity to decide. Government to offer support, financial and emotional, to families who keep the child.
- Acceptance up to a certain date look at adoption first.
- Judges should decide.
- Disagree that abortion should always be forbidden. She can have one and be given counselling.
- No; have a kibbutz where everyone raises everyone.

Unemployment

Derrick Sylvester has been unemployed for 12 years. He goes to the job centre every week to sign on but doesn't find anything to his liking. He once had a high flying career as a manager for Woolworths which has now gone bust.

How does your community deal with this?

- Give support in finding jobs and educational support eg courses to help develop skills. Work experience placements and taster days to give idea of future careers.
- Everyone should look after each other so nobody would starve.
- Everything should be shared out and all food given out fairly.
- Everyone should have chances and be given 6 months help if they can prove they are looking for a job. Anyone in poverty should be given direct support not money.
- Everyone should donate to those who are poor.
- Unemployed should learn new skills while being paid. Physically disabled should get benefits and assistance while those who can work must do any job available.
- Do voluntary jobs while receiving benefit. Take any job offered give money to get started and vouchers for food.
- Don't be fussy about the jobs offered. Reserve community jobs for unemployed people.
- No unemployment benefits; give music lessons so they can go and busk.

Embryology and Cloning

Beatrice and Dominic Fotherington-Carstairs lost their 4 year old son in a freak accident at the local fun fair. Even though it has been 3 years they are still grieving. They have recently been researching cloning on the internet and feel this is the perfect solution to their problem. They are able to pay any amount to get their son back.

How does your community deal with this?

- Should not play God, life would lose its value.
- No to cloning.
- All religions disagree with cloning so do we.
- Not ethical he soul should be left in peace.
- No, the child will be spiritually different but biologically the same so a clone cannot replace the original.
- Teacher grieving relatives how to keep memories alive without cloning.
- It's not the same person. Unfair for the designer baby who has no choice in the purpose of their life. Sanctity of life is the most important.
- No cloning the clone will not be the same so doesn't stop grief. Counseling should be offered. Designer babies should not be born but research can be done.
- Everything happens for a reason and it is unnatural to clone a human. Only God should have power to create life.

Religious Dress Code

Some of the people on your island want to have a dress code that allows them to identify other people in the community

How tolerant will you be towards different religious and cultural dress codes?

- People can wear clothes for their religion but otherwise all should be nudists.
- Everyone can wear what they want as long as it doesn't infringe on other peoples freedom or rights.
- People can wear what they want but not if it causes harm to others. Teachers need to see pupils faces.
- In school everyone should be the same but otherwise people should wear what they want to express their religion and culture through clothes and appearance.
- Discrimination is unacceptable. Religious clothing can be worn out of choice people should not be pressurized to wear certain clothes. Offensive or indecent dress is not allowed.

- Let people express themselves through their clothes.
- Personal choice of clothes no need for identification and no offensive clothing.
- Everyone allowed to wear what they want to but schools and certain workplaces will be in uniform.
- People should be allowed to wear what they want and each religion allowed to wear one item but not allowed to carry harmful items eg daggers.

Euthanasia

Some people with terminal illnesses want to be able to take their own lives. Will your community tolerate euthanasia or suicide?

- Don't involve others and make them murderers.
- People can have the choice.
- Not if the person is in a coma. Should sign a contract and must have done counselling.
- Final choice is the patients but everybody should try to convince them not to do it.
- Acceptable in certain circumstances.
- Yes people should be allowed to do this.
- Only if the person can sign their consent to wanting to die.
- Suicide is wrong. Should be treated and left to God's will.
- Letting someone help you do is immoral, family should have counselling, and active euthanasia can be seen as agape or murder.
- Shouldn't be legal.
- People who help should not be punished.
- Process should make it safer to help a person. Laws on suicide should be ignored. Euthanasia is acceptable.

Appendix 2

Some issues raised at SACRE meetings

- Should pupils be allowed to wear religious symbols in school?
Reasons for
Express themselves and their opinions
Unite those of a similar faith
Any sort of individualism causes conflict
Respect; certain items considered necessary by faith
School decides what is reasonable
People may become ignorant if they don't appreciate others
Allows freedom self belief and security
It doesn't harm anyone
Promotes discussion and tolerance

Reasons against
May go against a dress code. Conflict for non religious wearer of jewellery
Cause conflict and discrimination
Draws attention
Some religious symbols might offend others
Spread racial hatred
Creates a divide/ inter racial conflict. Could lead to a backlash
Reasons to bully
Health and safety, some symbols could be harmful
- Should RE be taught in schools
Reasons for
Gives knowledge, England is multi faith so it eliminates ignorance and racism if a person is aware of differences and meanings
Understand another point of view
No education would be complete without it
Find yourself; develops respect
Develops own personal views so you can question the media reports

Reasons against
Not everyone is religious
Not given importance in schools
Could create certain stereotypes – the way it is taught
Must not only focus on one religion
May offend if not taught correctly
Can be complex
Parents think it will make their children religious
Indoctrination by promoting religious belief over atheism
- Should you compare miracles and magic?
Reasons for
Unexplained by science- no explainable cause
Simple for little children
Gives an explanation

Reasons against

Miracles involve faith and belief whereas magic is mere chance and not influenced by external realms

Causes confusion and takes God away

Derogatory to views of believers

Magic is more fictional; if a child finds how the magic was done it will think everything is a lie. Could mislead children

Miracles are religious happenings

Miracles have a meaning, divine and Holy/ magic is for fun

- Should SACRE have it's own webpage on the Bromley website

Reasons for

Help gain attention for SACRE

So everyone can get involved

Let people know about it

Yes it appeals to young people

Teach people about SACRE

Available to many individuals. Building the local community

Reasons Against

May offend non religious people

Would need to be updated a lot so more work for someone

Some views could be very opinionated

- How should the religions taught be decided?

Reasons for

Atheists should be taught, all religion should be taught simply

All religion should be taught

Focus on main world religions

The way it should be taught is; people from different religions talking

Experiences-temples/places of worship/ communities

DVDs

Appendix 3

Knowing Evaluation sheet

Please give each of the activities a number from 1-5

1 being poor and 5 being very good

	1	2	3	4	5
Starter activity	0	2	8	12	11
Film					
'Act now, change the future'	0	2	13	20	6
Designing an Island Life	0	4	11	20	7
Feed back session	1	5	18	16	2
Bromley Statistics, What is a SACRE?	1	18	14	7	2
SACRE Q and A paper	1	9	12	16	4
Film, 'What could you change?'	1	6	12	18	4
Advice for the future	2	9	11	12	7
Refreshments/lunch	0	1	7	17	14
* * * * *					

Would you like to be part of the new Youth SACRE?

Yes 25 No 16

(7 students did not hand in forms and 7 students were unsure)