

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2010
starting at 6.30pm

Present:

Martin Sweet (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Anne Manning (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Roger Charsley, Russell Jackson,
Diana MacMull, Anne Manning and Ian F. Payne
Rev M Camp, Mr Green, Mr Stone, Ms Tranchina,
Mr Gupta, Mr Hagley, Mr Mahmood, Mr Riat and
Mrs Polydorou (co-opted member)

Also Present:

Dr George Searle and Mrs Penny Smith-Orr, RE Adviser

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Hawkes, Mrs James, Mrs Michaelis and Rev Varney. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Payne who had earlier attended another meeting. The Chairman welcomed the new Councillor members to the meeting and introductions took place. It was noted that this would be the last SACRE meeting for Mr Green from Bullers Wood School, who would be moving to a new school outside the Borough in September 2010.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2010

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 2 February 2010 be confirmed.

Matters Arising:

Item 7) Students had been invited to attend the summer meeting of SACRE, but were unable to do so due to examination commitments. It was hoped that they would be able to attend the next meeting.

Item 8) Dr Searle reported that he had just received notification that the Secretary of State for Education had announced that the Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) was to be abolished within a few months. The Chairman commented that he hoped the expertise of Mark Chater the QCDA RE Consultant would not be lost.

4 ORAL UPDATE & PUBLICATIONS

a) NASACRE AGM

The Chairman and RE Adviser had attended the NASACRE meeting on 12th May 2010, when Clare Short had given a keynote address on "Religion, Politics and Community: SACREs capacity to engage". (Notes of the address are attached to these minutes - Appendix 1). The meeting saw the launch of the CD "Effective SACREs" which gives guidance on the materials available to help SACREs become successful.

b) London SACRE

Members had been invited to attend the annual meeting of the London and South-East SACREs, to be held at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church on 18th June 2010. Councillors Charsley and Manning and Mr Mahmood wished to attend. The clerk to SACRE would arrange the booking for them.

c) Islamic competition 2010

Mr Mahmood informed the meeting that so far only one school had confirmed their attendance at this event which was to take place at Darul Uloom on 4th November 2010 between 7-9pm. All schools had been invited to participate. Members of SACRE were also invited, but were asked to notify Mr Mahmood at least one week beforehand if they wished to attend, in order to assist with catering. The RE Adviser and Councillor Manning had previously attended the event which was most enjoyable and appreciated by all, including teachers, students and parents who had attended.

d) 6th Form Conference- Prevent

At the previous SACRE meeting a presentation had been given by the Head of Community Safety which emphasised the importance of community cohesion.

The RE Adviser informed SACRE members that there was to be a conference for Year 12 students at the Education Development Centre on 15th July 2010. SACRE faith members were asked if they might be able to take part in a question and answer session at the conference lasting about half an hour. The RE Adviser agreed to email faith representatives with more information on what would be required. The Police would be at the conference with an "Act Now" presentation, and there would also be a theatre group attending.

A conference for teachers on Community Cohesion was planned for the 9th July 2010, when Lat Blaylock would be speaking. The SACRE RE Adviser had notified Bromley schools of the event which was being run by Jan Thompson, RE Adviser for the Rochester Diocese. It was understood that so far only four teachers had booked into the conference but ten were needed in order for it to be viable.

e) Holocaust Event

An event as part of the “Legacy of Hope” programme was organised by Mandy King, (Pupil Support Service), and had been held at Cator Park School on 10th March 2010. (This event had been launched on 27th January 2010 – Holocaust Memorial Day.) Several schools had been involved and Mr Mahmood had given a presentation at the event. The RE Adviser commented that the occasion had been very good and had incorporated dancing, acting, poetry and drawing. Mandy King hoped to run the event again in 2011. The Chairman remarked that Anne Frank Day was on 12th June 2010, when some schools would be holding a special assembly.

f) RE Celebrations 2011

RE Celebrations would take place during March 2011 and details can be viewed on <http://www.celebratingre.org>. It was hoped that SACREs would be involved and would encourage schools to celebrate. The RE Adviser had notified schools and would give out fliers via the Bromley Primary Schools Network in a few weeks time. She would also forward further details to SACRE members via the committee clerk.

g) Faith Directory

This was in the process of being finalised. A lot of information had been provided by faith representatives and churches on suitable people who would be able to speak to schools in collective worship time or during lessons. Mr Gupta said that he had been contacted and had visited St Vincent’s Catholic Primary school in Mottingham. Mr Mahmood remarked that he too had been invited to attend the school. He commented on the importance of keeping the directory regularly updated but expressed concern about individual’s contact details being made public as it was understood that the faith directory could be made available via the Bromley internet. Councillor Payne stated that under the Data Protection Act individuals would have to give permission for their contact details to be made public. The Chairman and RE Adviser confirmed that before the information was published those involved would be asked to agree to this and to confirm that the information was correct.

The RE Adviser informed members that she had had discussions with Andrew Ferrier, ICT Adviser from Bromley. He had been liaising with Gareth Denton from LB Croydon who was working on publishing something similar for that Authority. It was hoped that with agreement from LB Croydon an appropriate template could be prepared which could also be used by Bromley. The Assistant Director for Learning and Achievement outlined and explained the Managed Learning Environment in schools which gave pupils and teachers their own web space, designed to enhance teaching and learning.

5 BROMLEY SACRE ANNUAL EVENT 2010

Report No. DCYP10072

The RE Adviser informed members that it was hoped a speaker would be able to take part in the annual event for 2010 by talking on the value of excellent Religious Education. The Assistant Director for Learning and Achievement suggested that the Chairman and RE Adviser meet outside of the meeting to discuss arrangements on when and where the event should take place and let him have details of the costs involved. A possible venue would be the Education Development Centre during Interfaith week, 22nd - 26th November 2010 (although it was not essential that the event took place during this week if the speaker was not available). Previous annual events had included the 6th Form Conference, a speaker from the Canterbury Diocese and a talk on Self-Evaluation by Mark Chater from the QCDA.

The Chairman expressed the view that it would be good to have a speaker who would be of particular benefit to teachers. Ms Tranchina said it would be helpful for Primary Schools to have information about using the internet as a resource. Mr Stone suggested that it would be good to look at philosophy for children and the Assistant Director agreed with this. He thought it would be good to have a speaker during the "twilight" session to give professional leadership.

RESOLVED that the Chairman, RE Adviser and Assistant Director for Learning and Achievement meet to discuss the event.

6 BROMLEY YOUTH SACRE AND SACRE WEBSITE

Report No. DCYP10073

The Youth SACRE had been formed as a result of the 6th Form Conference which was the annual SACRE event in 2009. The youth SACRE had met twice on the 2nd March and 27th April 2010, and the notes of their meetings were circulated with the SACRE agenda. The RE Adviser informed the meeting that Year 13 students from Hayes school who had attended the second meeting said that they would go back to school to talk about Youth SACRE to the year 11 pupils. The next meeting of the Youth SACRE was due to take place on 16th June 2010. The students were very keen on a SACRE website and had lots of ideas for it. They planned to meet early on the 16th June in the IT suite at Cooper's Technology School to put together some ideas. (Incorporating the faith directory on the SACRE website had been discussed under item 4(g) above.) The Chairman commented on the very positive feedback from the Youth SACRE and agreed to write to the five Head Teachers who had been involved to express SACRE's appreciation.

RESOLVED that

- (i) members note the information from the Youth SACRE and endorse the work carried out so far and;**
- (ii) the Chairman write to the Head Teachers of the schools involved with Youth SACRE.**

7 BROMLEY SACRE AGREED SYLLABUS

Report No: DCYP10074

At the previous meeting it was decided that some time would be spent at the May meeting looking at the Bromley Agreed Syllabus in accordance with the development plan. Members had been sent the internet link to the current syllabus. Whilst there was time before the Agreed Syllabus Conference needed to be held, the opportunity was taken to raise awareness of the current syllabus. The RE Adviser outlined the current RE syllabus for both Primary and Secondary Schools in Bromley. The publication currently in use for primary schools in Bromley was the "Bromley Primary Scheme of Work for Religious Education 2004" published by LB Bromley. For secondary schools the documents used were "Religious Education: the non-statutory national framework 2004", published by the Department for Education & Skills, and the "Bromley Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (2007) published by LB Bromley.

The Chairman and RE Adviser gave a verbal report on syllabus information given at the QCDA conference held in March 2010. A new document entitled "RE in English Schools: Non Statutory Guidance 2010, had been published by the Department for Children Schools and Families.

The RE Adviser stated that in Bromley it had been decided it was not appropriate for secular study at primary schools, but secular views were taught in secondary schools. Christianity was however the core religion to be studied at each stage.

The RE Adviser commented that some teachers were not happy with the study of Pilgrimages in Year 6, and some teachers at Key stage 1 felt that the syllabus was a "bit dull" and added things to it. The Rev Camp stated that he would not like to see pilgrimages disappear from the curriculum, and asked what teachers added to the syllabus. The RE Adviser said that sometimes the teachers added information in about other faiths, especially if they had children from a non-Christian faith in their class. Teachers had expressed anxiety not about content but about support to deliver RE education. Mark Chater from the QCDA had worked with a number of SACREs on what the syllabus might look like. The ideas being put forward were that the Primary Curriculum was going to be much freer, and more about concepts than content.

Ms Tranchina commented that often in Primary Schools RE was taught by non-RE specialists who were happy to use the current guidance. The RE Adviser added that often class room assistants were also expected to help with teaching RE.

The Assistant Director for Learning and Achievement suggested that Bromley should look objectively at neighbouring authorities to see what they were doing.

The Chairman made the following comments:

1. A stronger picture needed to be obtained about what Religious Education really looks like in schools - more anecdotal evidence is needed. It is necessary to find the true picture of what teachers want in order to help them teach and deliver.

2. Bromley should maintain its distinctiveness as an Authority

3. A modern and relevant curriculum should be developed (The Chairman considered that the current Bromley Syllabus was dated in its style and approach.)

The Chairman considered that the end product should be for teachers to have a syllabus which they could “run with” and which would be adaptable with maximum flexibility. He remarked that it was important to listen to the views expressed by the Youth SACRE. There were some fantastic teachers in Bromley and some who needed support. It would be quite a challenge to produce a syllabus which was more exciting and creative.

RESOLVED that information from the CD “Essential SACREs” should be presented at the next meeting with the first 30 minutes of the meeting being used to explain how SACRE works which would be of benefit, particularly to new members.

8 BROMLEY SACRE SELF EVALUATION

Report No. DCYP 10075

The RE Adviser had been asked to look at the progress which had been made towards being an advanced SACRE. The RE Adviser referred to the Bromley SACRE Self-Evaluation results for Autumn 2008 and considered that Bromley were not yet an established SACRE for items 5B (Knowledge and understanding of the local religious, cultural, ethnic community) and 5C (Understanding the intrinsic contribution RE can make to social and racial harmony), although the Youth Conference and Youth SACRE had helped towards this. With reference to item 5D (Links to the LA initiatives promoting social and racial harmony) it would be helpful if SACRE had more knowledge of Local Authority initiatives and were able to contribute towards these. The Chairman remarked that he had previously met with The Head of Community Safety and Councillor Bloom, the former Portfolio Holder for Public Protection

and Safety. Councillor Payne suggested that Councillor Peter Morgan, the new Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety and Chairman of the Safer Bromley Partnership should be added to the distribution list for SACRE minutes.

The RE Adviser reported that NASACRE were producing a new version of the self evaluation tool; "Reporting and Evaluating Tool Kit" which was to be launched on 18th June 2010. The Chairman and RE Adviser would look at the document when published and report back at the next meeting. The Chairman commented that the new document would help to establish priorities and would assist in preparing the annual SACRE report.

RESOLVED that the Chairman and RE Adviser report back at the next meeting on the new self-evaluation tool.

9 SACRE VISITS TO SCHOOLS

Report no. DCYP10076

The RE Adviser reported on the successful visits to St Paul's Cray Primary School and Bishop Justus CE School which had taken place during the Spring term. No arrangements had yet been made for visits during the Summer term. The RE Adviser had tried to organise a visit to Hayes School and Councillor Manning one of the schools governor's said that she would follow this up. Mr Green and Mr Stone from Bullers Wood School thought a visit to their school might be possible and the Rev Camp suggested that a visit to Parish school could be made. Mr Riat and Councillor Payne indicated that they would be willing to accompany the RE Adviser on a visit. The Chairman asked other members to let the RE Adviser know if they might be available as it would be good to get as many SACRE Members as possible to attend school visits. The school visits assisted with informed debate and enabled members to get an idea of pressures experienced by teachers.

RESOLVED that the reports of the school visits be noted.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 20th October 2010 at 6.30pm. Councillor MacMull submitted her apologies for the meeting.

12 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

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The Chairman moved that the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the item of business referred to below as it was likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

The following summary

refers to matters involving exempt information

13 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2010

RESOLVED that the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2010 be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm

Chairman

Minute Annex

BROMLEY SACRE - Meeting held on 27th May 2010

Appendix 1

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SACREs MEETING 12th May 2010 at BMA House

Keynote Address by Clare Short

Title: Religion, Politics and Community: SACREs capacity to engage

Clare Short started by suggesting we live in “interesting times” which is, apparently, an old Chinese curse! She suggested that we are in a time of a new beginning and that she was in favour of a hung parliament. However, power is concentrated and driven by 24 hour media. She felt that the current sense of disillusionment is going to change in this new era.

She suggested that SACREs are a model of consensus except that they reach better decisions! She believed that secularisation/bureaucracy/heavyweight management has squashed creativity at the coal face of education. She felt that SACREs have pioneered (and should be the proof of) religious cohesion where the work of RE teaching has “massively” shifted our communities. She believed that RE teaching had taken Britain by the hand and led the country into a more open understanding community. She drew the conference’s attention to the NASACRE handbook, page 18, which invites children to consider the given issues outlined and suggested that this task was massive (did she mean impossible) and went on to suggest we live in a different world. She quoted Richard Layard (The Landmark Report for the Children’s Society 2009) which suggests that increased income growth does increase happiness – but only up to a point. After that it has no effect and, whilst we are rich beyond belief, as a society we are not happy. In the report “The Spirit Level: why equality is better for everyone” Wilkinson & Pickett suggest that inequality within society is a large issue across OECD countries and that GB is high up on the list of countries with inequality (second only to USA). We live in a hedonistic society whereby the means of getting to the top are different, hopefully, from the means set out in good RE.

In seeking the “meaning of life” she felt there was no good product to that task without love and care. We live in a global community and live with massive threats such as global warming and increased fuel and food prices. She believed that this can only lead to increased human displacement where Britain, for example, spends £2 billion a year badly treating immigrants. She quoted the Geneva Convention that ascertains that anyone fleeing for religious reasons should be accepted in the first country they come to. She expressed her concern that we allow criminal gangs to run our immigration policies so, therefore, all this is going to generate mass immigration with a future that either generates good solutions or nasty political segregation.

She also went on to express her concern that OECD wealth is not sustainable since there are insufficient basic resources such as oil and food. Although we have technology and capacity to respond on our own, segregation is inevitable, she warns, if our society can live on “sufficient” and not on “more”. She felt that the qualities set out in NASACREs mission for RE need to be nurtured with big questions of faith and belief.

She also believes that global co-operation is an essential requirement and it is not enough to have “smaller aims”. She felt that global realities are not wise in the who and/or how they support, certainly regimes. She quoted the Middle East and the thought that issues in Gaza are driving a bigger hatred. She noted that the BNP’s increased percentage of the vote was driven by Muslim rhetoric.

So she wonders if it is too big a task to challenge the inequalities that governments sustain.

She noted that the language of religion is unquestioningly the platform for fundamentalists of all backgrounds and she was concerned at the dividing lines that exist around the identity that religion demarcates. If the principles of religious education is seen as “good”, then we need to refine our curriculum to explore the dangers of segregation. She worried that in an age or season of cutbacks, unsavoury groups could flourish as unfair policies are implemented.

She concluded by saying that people are looking for something finer than the current hedonistic mode. However, SACREs can be a force for good and are needed more now than before. However, the job is harder than before if we are to “take the next generation by the hand”.