

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 6 March 2013

Present:

Martin Sweet (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Anne Manning (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Reg Adams, Roger Charsley and
David Jefferys
Virginia Corbyn, Christopher Town and Rev Steve Varney
Arlene Fane, Emma Honey, (Fiona Hawkes and Jed Stone
from 6.40pm)
Samantha Barnett, Patricia Colling, Sanjay Gupta,
Saiyed Mahmood, Sue Polyourou and Swarn Riat

Also Present:

Ms Penny Smith-Orr, RE Adviser
Sue Mordecai, Head of Learning
Christine Reeks, Clerk to SACRE

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephen Carr, Councillor Gordon Norrie, Ray Hagley and Jackie Tranchina. Apologies for lateness had been received prior to the meeting from Fiona Hawkes and Jed Stone. The Chairman welcomed Sue Mordecai, Head of Learning who apologised for having to leave the meeting early.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 AGREED SYLLABUS UPDATE (Considered from 6pm to 7pm)

The Bromley Agreed Syllabus and scheme of work was being revised to bring them into line with current thinking on RE teaching. The RE Adviser circulated copies of the draft units of work which had been updated taking into account comments and amendments made by the various faith groups. Following considerable discussion SACRE Members were asked to contact the RE Adviser direct if they had any outstanding concerns. The item would be considered again at the next SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED that SACRE Members contact the RE Adviser with any outstanding concerns on the agreed syllabus update.

(Sue Mordecai and Arlene Fane left the meeting after consideration of this item.)

4 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 7th November 2012 be confirmed subject to the following amendments:

Minute 5(e):

fifth line, amend “had been release from embargo” to “had been released from embargo”.

eleventh line, amend “encouraged them to respond” to “encourage them to respond”.

B) MATTERS ARISING:

Minute 4b: The RE Adviser had contacted the Governor Support Office who confirmed they would be happy to send out a mini questionnaire on behalf of SACRE to the Chairmen of School Governors. The RE Adviser would liaise with the SACRE Chairman regarding the questions to be asked. **(Action PSO)**

Minute 5e: re: Inter Faith Week. Patricia Colling, the Catholic Representative on SACRE reported that the project concerned had been “a suggestion” at an inter-faith meeting i.e. that different religions could produce a power point presentation which could be used as a teaching resource. It was noted that her church was preparing such a presentation.

Minute 6: The training session for Faith Directory volunteers would take place at the Civic Centre on Wednesday 20th March 2013 from 7 – 9 pm. The RE Adviser was aware of approximately 15 people who would be attending. SACRE Members were asked to notify the RE Adviser if they knew of any additional volunteer speakers who would be able to attend. When the Faith Directory was produced it was important to point out (with regard to child protection issues), that there was no endorsement implicit in the list of volunteers provided. It would be up to the individual schools concerned to implement their own child protection policy.

5 ORAL UPDATE & PUBLICATIONS

a) National RE Update

The Chairman reported that a communication had been received from the Department for Education on Religious Education and Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools. This included clarification of the relationship between SACRE’s and Academies (see attached Appendix). It was suggested that this document should be sent to all Bromley Academy Head Teachers and in particular to the overarching federations for the academy trusts.

The Chairman commented that John Keast the Chairman of the RE Council had recently remarked that plans to introduce the E Bacc had damaged the status of RE in schools which was not likely to recover quickly. Plans to change the system of GCSEs and GCSE boards have now been abandoned which has relieved the pressure on RE slightly but the schools are still putting most of their resources into the EBacc subjects. The RE Adviser commented that although pupils were still being entered for the full GCSE course for RE, the number of pupils studying the short RE course had decreased. Fiona Hawkes commented that pupils at Coopers Technology College were no longer doing the short course and that next year all pupils in Year 9 at the College would be doing the full GCSE course for RE.

b) SACRE Annual Report for 2011 – 2012

The annual report had been distributed to NASACRE, all Bromley schools, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Members of the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee. It had also been sent to Michael Gove MP and other Members of Parliament (see item 5d of the SACRE minutes dated 7th November 2012). (The Department of Education had indicated that they did not wish to see the report.)

c) Islamic Competition

This very successful event had taken place at Darul Uloom on 15th November 2012. The Islamic Competition was much appreciated and valued and the Chairman thanked Mr Mahmood for organising the event.

Mr Mahmood informed the meeting that four schools had participated in the event and it was hoped that five schools would be taking part in the next competition which would take place on 7th November 2013. Further details would be circulated at a later date.

d) Youth SACRE - update

Unfortunately it had not been possible to hold a meeting of the Youth SACRE during the previous term. However, Fiona Hawkes informed the meeting that the children at her school (Coopers Technology College) had expressed an interest in holding a Youth SACRE meeting on a Friday evening. Emma Honey from Kemnal Technology College was invited to bring pupils to the Youth SACRE meeting. Fiona Hawkes would contact the RE Adviser to make the necessary arrangements. **(Action FH and PSO.)**

6 SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-14
Report No. ED13027

SACRE Members considered a report prepared by the RE Adviser together with a draft development plan for 2013-2014. The plan had been drawn up with due consideration to the statutory duties of SACRE.

The Chairman reported that a letter had been sent to him by the Assistant Director of Education which outlined that SACRE funding was secure for 2013-14, but that there were issues regarding future funding of SACRE for 2014-15. It also commented on the fact that due to budgetary restraints the Education Department would not be able to provide officer support for SACRE, (Sue Mordecai would be leaving the Authority at the end of March 2013). The Chairman proposed that he should write to the Assistant Director of Education as he was concerned about the level of support being given to SACRE which was a statutory body. In view of their position the Councillor Members on SACRE expressed concern about the nature of the letter to be sent and Councillor Mrs Manning as Vice-Chairman agreed to look at the draft letter before it was sent to the Assistant Director.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the draft SACRE development plan for 2013 – 2014 be agreed; and**
- (ii) the Chairman to write to the Assistant Director of Education regarding the level of support being given to SACRE.**

(Mr Gupta and Mr Mahmood left the meeting after consideration of this item.)

7 SCHOOL VISITS
Report No. ED13026

School visits during the Autumn term had been organised by the Chair of SACRE to allow the RE Adviser time to continue working on the Bromley RE Syllabus revision.

On 21st November 2012 the Chairman, Councillor Charsley and Samantha Barnett visited Castlecombe Primary School, and on 3rd December 2012 the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Manning and Mr Mahmood visited Hayes Secondary School. Reports of the visits were considered by SACRE Members.

Samantha Barnett commented that she had been impressed with the visit to Castlecombe School and that the children had been very engaged. She had found the visit very useful and it had been particularly interesting to see such diversity within a Bromley school. The Chairman drew SACRE Members attention to the key issues for SACRE outlined at the end of the report.

With regard to the visit to Hayes school Councillor Mrs Manning highlighted the fact that the school was very keen to work with “feeder” schools. She also suggested that perhaps the pupils at Hayes school could be encouraged to take part in the Youth SACRE. The RE Adviser said she had been in contact with the Head of the RE Department at the school about Youth SACRE, and would notify him when a meeting date had been arranged.

The Chairman commented on the excellent presentation given by year 9 students on the topic of "Religious Education, Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Development at Hayes School" and remarked that perhaps the presentation could be shown to SACRE Members at a future meeting. Jed Stone and Emma Honey suggested that perhaps they could arrange for some of their pupils to attend a future SACRE meeting to give a similar presentation/talk. Members considered this to be a good idea. If possible arrangements would be made for pupils to attend the summer meeting of SACRE.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the reports of the school visits be noted and arrangements be made for visits to take place during the Spring term.**
- (ii) If possible arrangements be made for students to attend the next meeting of SACRE to give a presentation to Members.**

(Councillor Jefferys and Mr Town left the meeting after consideration of this item.)

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Rev Steve Varney asked about the current position regarding the Church of England Vacancy on SACRE and was told that the matter was currently being considered by the Diocese of Rochester.

(b) It was noted that the Chairman and RE Adviser would be attending the NASACRE AGM in Birmingham on 23rd May 2013.

9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 5th June 2013
Wednesday 6th November 2013
Wednesday 5th March 2014

All meetings to start at 6.30pm

Emma Honey asked if it would be possible for the next SACRE meeting to be changed from the 5th to the 19th June 2013 in order to fit in with school examination commitments. The SACRE Clerk would make enquiries to find out if this would be possible. *(Following further consultation with the Chairman after the meeting it was agreed that the original date and time i.e. 5th June 2013 at 6.30pm should stand).*

The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman

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STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION 6TH MARCH 2013

Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools Q&A

1. Are Free Schools subject to the same requirements as Academies?

Free Schools are Academies in law and have the same requirement to provide RE and collective worship. In this document, any reference to Academies includes Free Schools.

2. Do Academies have to provide RE?

Yes, under the terms of their Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, all Academies have to provide RE for all their pupils, except for those whose parents exercise the right of withdrawal. The type of RE specified in the Funding Agreement depends on whether or not the Academy has a religious designation, and for converter Academies, on whether the predecessor school was a voluntary controlled (VC), Voluntary aided (VA) or foundation school.

3. Does an Academy with a religious designation have to follow a particular RE syllabus?

Other than for Academies where the predecessor school was a VC or foundation school, the model funding agreement specifies that an Academy with a religious designation must provide RE in accordance with the tenets of the particular faith specified in the designation. They may, in addition, provide RE that is in line with a locally agreed syllabus and teach about other faiths if they choose.

4. What is a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)?

A SACRE is a permanent body which must be established by each local authority. LAs must appoint representatives to each of four committees, representing respectively:

☐ Group A: Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area

☐ Group B: the Church of England

☐ Group C: teacher associations

☐ Group D: the LA

5. What is the role of a SACRE in relation to Academies?

A Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) has a statutory remit to advise the Local Authority on Religious Education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus and to support the effective provision of collective worship. A SACRE also has within its powers to discuss any matter related to its functions as it sees fit and may therefore include the provision of RE in Academies in its discussions or address such matters as may be referred to it. An Academy or group of academies can be represented through co-option onto the local SACRE (or indeed any SACRE) if all parties are in agreement.

6. What is a locally agreed syllabus?

An agreed syllabus is a religious education syllabus that is designed by a local authority's Agreed Syllabus Conference ('ASC') primarily for use in the Local Authority's (LA) maintained schools but which may be adopted by a different local authority or Academy as its provision for Religious Education. The syllabus, like the provision for RE in Academies, must reflect that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. There is a structure for establishing an ASC which is defined in law. An ASC must have four committees, comprising representatives from the Church of England, other Christian denominations and religions, teachers and the LA. Each Committee has voting rights in coming to an agreement on the syllabus, which it recommends to the LA for adoption. There is no requirement for an Academy to adopt a locally agreed syllabus. It may choose to adopt a different syllabus or develop its own, as long as it meets the requirements for such a syllabus as above. Academies are accountable for the quality of their curricular provision including RE.

7. What type of RE will an Academy that is not designated with a religious character provide?

The Funding Agreement for an Academy without a religious designation states that it must arrange for RE to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses that are set out in section 375(3) of the Education Act 1996 and paragraph (5) of Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This means a syllabus that reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. It also means that an Academy without a religious designation must not provide an RE syllabus to pupils by means of any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination. This gives an Academy without a religious designation the freedom to design its own RE syllabus (within those constraints) and not be bound by the specific locally agreed syllabus that maintained schools are required to follow. However, Academies are free to follow the locally agreed syllabus if they choose or they can choose another from a different Local Authority area.

8. Are there any variations to the general position as described?

Some non-denominational Academies with a religious designation (e.g. those designated as 'Christian') have funding agreements specifying that they will use the locally agreed syllabus. Academies that opened early in the Academies Programme before around 2004 have a general requirement to provide RE and collective worship. However the detailed requirements may differ. It would be wise for the EFA to check the specific FA wording if they receive a query about the detailed requirement for RE in a very old Academy. The position is also different in former foundation or voluntary controlled faith schools that have converted to Academies and this is explained below.

9. What is the position for former voluntary controlled and foundation schools with a religious designation that have converted to Academies?

Foundation or voluntary controlled schools with a religious designation that convert to Academies must arrange for RE in accordance with the requirements for agreed syllabuses (in the main Christian whilst taking account of the other principal religions etc as set out above) unless any

parents request that their children receive RE in accordance with the tenets of the school's faith. If any parents do request this, the Academy must make arrangements for those children to receive such RE unless, because of special circumstances, it would be unreasonable to do so. The Funding Agreement sets this out (by applying the relevant provisions of the Education Act 1996 and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998). In practice these Academies generally choose to follow the locally agreed syllabus.

10. Do all Academies have to offer a daily act of collective worship?

An Academy's Funding Agreement is drafted to mirror the requirements for acts of collective worship in maintained schools. Each pupil must take part in a daily act of collective worship unless they have been withdrawn by their parents, or if in the sixth form they have decided to withdraw themselves. This applies to Academies with and without a religious designation.

11. What kind of collective worship would an Academy with a religious designation provide?

Such an Academy must provide collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy's designated faith. It can also choose to reflect the other principal religions and those found in the local community.

12. Does the above apply to former voluntary controlled or foundation schools with a religious designation that have converted to Academies?

Yes. They must provide collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Academy's designated faith.

13. In an Academy without a religious designation, does the act of collective worship have to be broadly Christian in nature?

Such an Academy must provide collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. A school can reflect the religious backgrounds represented in its community, as long as the majority of provision is broadly Christian.

14. Can an Academy without a religious designation apply for exemption from providing broadly Christian collective worship?

Yes. A maintained school can apply to the local SACRE for an exemption not to provide broadly Christian collective worship for some or all of its pupils, having considered the family background of pupils attending the school. An equivalent provision applies to Academies but the Academy Trust would apply, through the EFA, to the Secretary of State for the determination. Such a determination does not mean that the Academy or school would be exempted from providing any collective worship. They would still be required to provide daily collective worship, but of a different character that is more appropriate given the family backgrounds of the pupils in the school. The Secretary of State may approach the local SACRE for its view when considering such an application.

15. Can parents withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship?

Yes. Parents of children in Academies have an equivalent right to parents of children in maintained schools, to withdraw their children from religious education and or collective worship. Please note

that pupils over compulsory school age (16) can opt out of collective worship if they wish however they cannot opt out of receiving Religious Education.

16. Who inspects RE and collective worship in Academies with a religious designation?

Religiously designated Academies are required by their funding agreement to arrange for the inspection of any denominational RE and collective worship. In line with the arrangements for designated maintained schools, Academies, when choosing an inspector, must consult the relevant religious authority.

- (a) CofE / Catholic: the appropriate diocesan authority;
- (b) Jewish (note this is non-denominational): the Jewish Studies Education Inspection Service;
- (c) Methodist: the Education Secretary of the Methodist Church;
- (d) Muslim: the Association of Muslim Schools;
- (e) Sikh: Network of Sikh Organisations;
- (f) Seventh Day Adventist: the Education Department of the British Union Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist

17. How is RE and collective worship inspected in Academies without a religious designation?

Section 48 inspections, section 5 and Ofsted subject survey visits of Academies follow the same format as those of maintained schools. Judgements about RE are made in relation to the requirements which are applied to RE in the funding agreement. Where an academy has chosen to follow a locally agreed syllabus that will be used as the basis for judging standards and provision. Where no alternative arrangement for judging standards and progress has been developed or adopted, the expectations set out in the non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education (2004) will be used as a benchmark for National Standards. The quality of the provision is judged in terms of how well it secures progress towards the expected pupil outcomes