

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 29 June 2016

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, Robert Evans, David Jefferys and Sarah Phillips

Mrs D Angell, Ms H Arnold, Mrs V Corbyn, Mr A Nandra, Mrs S Polydorou, Ms C Shelley, Mr J Stone and Mrs E Whitman

Also Present:

Penny Smith-Orr, RE Consultant/Advisor
Julia Waldman, Interim Head of Schools and Early Years Quality Assurance and Commissioning
Stella Odusola, Teacher, Langley Park Girls School

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Russell Mellor, Councillor Keith Onslow, Christopher Town, Reverend Stephen Varney, Samantha Barnett and Mr Mahmood. Apologies for lateness had been received prior to the meeting from Councillor David Jefferys, Councillor Sarah Phillips and Edlene Whitman.

Denise Angell and Sue Polydorou apologised for having to leave the meeting early due to other commitments.

The Chairman welcomed Stella Odusola, a teacher from Langley Park Girls School, who was attending the meeting as an observer. It was noted that she would be taking up the role of RE Coordinator at the school from next term and would be a new teacher representative to SACRE.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH MARCH 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 9th March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 36 (B): Matters Arising - delete "(ii) The RE Consultant would update the SACRE members by the next meeting on the Archdeacon's response to the idea of an inter faith group for Bromley."

B) MATTERS ARISING:

Minute 36 (B): Matters Arising (i)

The Chairman noted that he had not yet met with the Chairman of Croydon SACRE. They had hoped to meet at the NASACRE AGM, but the Croydon Chairman had been unable to attend. They would continue to try to arrange a meeting.

Minute 36 (B): Matters Arising (iii)

The RE Consultant confirmed that she had drafted a letter to Academies and Free Schools in order to encourage their engagement with Bromley SACRE, and would send on to the Chairman.

RESOLVED that SACRE members be updated in due course concerning the anticipated meeting between the Chairman of Croydon SACRE and Bromley SACRE.

4 ORAL UPDATE & PUBLICATIONS

In Mr Mahmood's absence, SACRE members were advised by Mr Jed Stone that the prize giving for the Islamic Competition would take place at Darul Uloom on Thursday 10th November 2016. Mr Stone informed the group that this was a competition open to all Bromley schools to complete a project on Islam going beyond media stereotypes. Students at his school carried out research and interviews to present a balanced view. They were able to work on the project over the summer holidays if they wished, and all projects were to be submitted by the second week of the autumn term. Older students at the school were involved in narrowing down the entries to select the best ten, which would then be presented to Mr Mahmood. The best ten entries from schools across the borough were then selected by Mr Mahmood and the students that created them were invited to the prize giving ceremony.

5 SCHOOL VISITS

SACRE members visit local schools in order to observe the teaching of RE and to offer support to the RE Coordinator of the school. In the spring term the RE Consultant and members of SACRE had visited two schools as a result of invitations from the RE Coordinators.

On 9th March 2016 the RE Consultant and Chairman visited St John's CE Primary School, having been invited by Mrs Shirley Crampsie. A visit was also made by SACRE members to Marjorie McClure School on 10th March 2016 at the request of Ms Melissa Keer. Reports on the school visits were considered

by SACRE members. The RE Consultant commented that both visits had been extremely joyful and uplifting.

During the visit to St John's CE Primary School the Chairman and RE Consultant had met with the Head and Deputy Head Teachers, and Lee Kings who was on a terms secondment from Bishop Justus Secondary School and the Aquinas Trust. They were carrying out an RE inspection on the day the visit took place and allowed the Chairman and RE Consultant to shadow them. Throughout the course of the visit they saw the children thoroughly engaged in activities for Easter and observed a very uplifting collective worship.

The visit to Marjorie McClure School was described as a brilliant and fun experience. It was a school for children aged 4 to 19 years with diverse special needs. SACRE members had been unable to observe an RE lesson, but had taken part in their collective worship, which involved pupils of all ages and members of staff sitting among them. It was noted that the school had taken a great deal of effort to ensure that there was an area or display in each class that worked for all the pupils and had a definite focus.

SACRE members were provided with copies of guidelines and evaluation sheets for visiting schools that had been agreed a few years previously. It was noted that members should be mindful that the visits were not inspections of the RE departments in schools and that these forms were not taken into the classrooms when visits were carried out. The Chairman felt that taking part in these visits confirmed to schools that Bromley SACRE showed an interest in them. Mr Nandra commented that the reports to the SACRE regarding the collective worship taking place in schools sounded very valuable and that he would be interested in taking part in a future school visit.

RESOLVED that the reports of the visits to St John's CE Primary School and Marjorie McClure School be noted.

6 NASACRE CONFERENCE AND AGM

The Chairman and Julia Waldman had attended the NASACRE Conference and AGM which was held Tuesday 17th May 2016 in Westminster. The RE Consultant had also attended on behalf of Croydon SACRE.

The Keynote Speakers were the Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE, who served as Chair for the recently published Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life and Professor Adam Dinham, the co-author of RE for REal: The future of teaching and learning about belief.

Julia Waldman had prepared notes of the conference and these were considered by SACRE members. It was felt that the day was interesting, having put a focus on SACREs in context of the changes around RE, but a number of attendees had been disappointed that there had been little opportunity to share ideas and discuss what other SACREs do. Baroness

Butler-Sloss had been invited to attend as she had chaired the Commission, but she stated at the beginning of her speech that she knew little about education. The focus groups had also been thought badly structured and vague, so had not been as useful as the attendees expected. Members enquired as to whether any clarity was given regarding the key reports discussed at the last meeting. The Chairman stated that David Hampshire, Chair of NASACRE, had put it into context, and admitted that the Government had not thought about the impact on SACREs with regards to academies. The duties of SACREs would not change, but the context within Bromley would.

It was noted that David Hampshire had since resigned his position as Chair of NASACRE, and that Paul Smalley as Vice Chair, would automatically replace him. A copy of the statement from NASACRE was appended to the minutes.

7 HIGH COURT RULING ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND HUMANISM

SACRE members were provided with a copy of the NASACRE and AREIAC joint statement in response to the advice of Dr Satvinder Juss, King's College, University of London regarding the High Court ruling on Religious Education.

The High Court ruling of Mr Justice Warby on 25th November 2015 stated that in future all pupils studying the new GCSE orders would need to study two religions. The Humanist Association had challenged this in the High Court on the grounds that pupils should also be studying a secular world view. The ruling agreed that this should be the case at Key Stage 4.

Mrs Polydorou, the Humanist co-opted member of SACRE commented that Dr Juss had taken his own view of the High Court Ruling, but felt that paragraph 39 was key, advising that "the state must accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious beliefs", and that there was scope to be flexible. It was understood that the Humanist Association had sent Dr Juss' briefing to all schools, but teacher representatives of SACRE said that they had not seen a copy. Mrs Polydorou said she would follow this up.

A discussion took place regarding the choices of religions to study from the Bromley curriculum, which highlighted that there were many other faith systems and questioned what religion means. Members commented that they felt the words 'Religious Education' needed to be moved on from, and that 'Religious Literacy' may show a better relationship with the curriculum.

8 SACRE SELF EVALUATION

It was suggested that prior to the meeting, members look at the following sections of the SACRE Reporting and Evaluating Toolkit and come ready to discuss their thoughts:

Group A members (representatives of other faiths and Christian denominations) were asked to focus on Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community.

Group B members (representatives from the Church of England) were asked to focus on Section 3 – Collective worship.

Group C members (teachers) were asked to focus on Section 2 – The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus.

Group D members (Councillors) were asked to focus on Section 4 – Management of SACRE.

The RE Consultant would complete Section 1 – Standards and Quality of Provision of RE.

At the meeting SACRE members were invited to divide into their membership groups to discuss and come to a consensus. Results of the self-evaluation can be seen in the table appended to these minutes.

Additional points arising from the discussion are listed below.

Section 1 – Standards and Quality of Provision of RE

The RE Consultant had considered the criteria from the perspective of answering up to this point in time. It was noted that *Key Areas 1C – Quality of learning and teaching* and *1E – Recruitment and retention of skilled specialist RE staff* were felt to lie in between the established and advanced criteria. For *Key Area 1F – Relations with academies and other non-LA maintained schools* it was regarded to be an unusual situation in Bromley. Schools had been encouraged to become academies much earlier, but were still involved with each other and had a relationship with the Local Authority.

Section 2 – The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus

The teaching group had stressed the importance of the Primary Schools' Forum, and the RE Consultant advised that this would no longer be funded by the Local Authority in line with other subject forums (this work was not part of SACRE). It was noted that church schools were involved in RE Connect which was arranged by Lee Kings, who would be happy for any other RE coordinators to attend. The teaching group also highlighted the diverse membership of the SACRE.

Section 3 – Collective worship

The Church of England group noted that for *Key Area 3B – Enhancing the quality of provision of collective worship*, SACRE members would only be able to have 'hands-on' experience of collective worship in schools if they were invited in. *Key Area 3C – Responding to requests for determinations* was considered to be in the established criteria, as although Bromley SACRE had not previously been asked, members felt that they would be able to put procedures in place if and when required.

The Church of England group also considered the SACREs successes and barriers to success. They felt the main success was visits to schools which were extremely positive, and the barrier to success was the changing local and national educational landscape. Areas for development were to keep up to date with what was happening locally and nationally, and for the Local Authority to maintain support for the SACRE within the current constraints.

Section 4 – Management of SACRE

The Councillors group felt that for *Key Area 4A – SACRE meetings* the SACRE could only meet the established criteria, as they did not agree with the final line of the advanced criteria, which stated that ‘meetings are held in a variety of venues, including local places of worship and schools’. In *Key Area 4F – Partnerships with key stakeholders*, Councillors recognised the effective and positive networks that had been created as a result of the SACRE.

Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community

The other faiths group considered that for *Key Area 5A – SACRE’s membership*, Bromley SACRE met the advanced criteria. It was noted that there were no gaps in the membership, and the presence of Councillors allowed them to represent their communities. The group felt that further work could be carried out to look at the changes in communities with regards to the Community Cohesion and Prevent Agendas.

RESOLVED that the SACRE self-evaluation be agreed and SACRE members consider how to improve on the scores going forward.

9 SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN

The group were advised that the Education White Paper 2016 was proposing changes to the education duties of local authorities, but SACRE duties were not proposed in the paper. As such a high number of Bromley schools had become academies the Local Authority’s Schools Standards Team was being reduced. The Local Authority did not have a school improvement role in Academy schools. It was noted that the committee would continue to be supported by the Education Service and Democratic Services and no reduction to the level of that support was planned.

SACRE members were provided with an action plan that had been drafted by Julia Waldman which outlined the core activities for the autumn term 2016 and spring term 2017 based on previous year’s activities. The next review of the Religious Education syllabus was not required until 2018, so members were asked to consider what work could take place now. It was noted the current contract for RE specialist support had come to an end but there was the potential for Education Services to commission work in the future if specific pieces of work were identified.

Members raised concerns that all of the school visits may be left for the Chairman to carry out and would not necessarily involve anyone with

expertise of Religious Education. Ms Waldman expressed that it would be helpful for other SACRE members to be involved in school visits and experience collective worship. The Chairman noted that it was unfortunate that teachers tended to be busy in their own schools, so were unable to take part in the visits to other schools. Ms Waldman said it may be possible to buy out teachers' time to participate in school visits.

A discussion took place regarding possible areas of work that the SACRE could undertake, and looking at the SACREs relationship with academies was felt to be important. Councillors highlighted the need to think about where the role of the SACRE could be mentioned, specifically within Public Protection, Safeguarding and the Health and Wellbeing Board and agreed that the SACRE was a greater resource to the Council than it realised.

The Chairman stated that he would be happy to meet with SACRE members outside of the diarised meetings to allow the opportunity to take forward any detailed planning. Members were asked to contact the SACRE clerk to express an interest in attending a meeting during September 2016. It was suggested that the Archdeacon could be invited to a future SACRE meeting and it was noted that Councillors intended to meet with Councillor Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Education to discuss the duties of the SACRE.

RESOLVED that the SACRE draft action plan for the autumn term 2016 be noted, and that a group of SACRE members meet in September to consider further the priorities and potential for Bromley SACRE's future.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Julia Waldman extended her thanks to the RE Consultant, Penny Smith-Orr, as this would be her last meeting. The Chairman thanked Penny for her work on behalf of the SACRE. SACRE members echoed this and said that she would be greatly missed.

11 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 9th November 2016
Wednesday 8th March 2017

All meetings to start at 6pm

The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman