

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 31 October 2018

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, Keith Onslow and Chris Pierce
Mrs D Angell, Ms H Arnold, Mrs S Barnett, Mrs V Corbyn,
Mr C Town, Reverend S Varney and Mrs E Whitman

Also Present:

Julia Andrew, LBB Head of School Standards
Carol Arnfield, LBB Head of Service for Early Years,
Schools Standards and Adult Education
Stacey Burman, SACRE RE Advisor
Dr Omar Taha, Al-Emaan Centre (Keston Mosque)

14 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robert Evans, Councillor David Jefferys, Ray Hagley, Mr Mahmood and Arvinder Nandra.

Reverend Steve Varney apologised for having to leave the meeting early due to other commitments.

The Chairman welcomed Stacey Burman, SACRE RE Advisor and Councillor Chris Pierce to the meeting, and introductions took place.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH JULY 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

B) MATTERS ARISING

Minute 4B): Matters arising

The Chairman advised members that, as the SACRE RE Advisor was in post, the letter to Headteachers could be drafted, and would form part of her introduction to the schools.

Minute 7: Oral Update & Publications

The PowerPoint presentation delivered by the Chairman to the School Governor Forum had been circulated, and members confirmed receipt.

Minute 10: SACRE Self Evaluation

A PDF version of the document 'Reflective Pools – Refreshing Collective Worship in Bromley Schools', had been produced, and would be circulated to members. **ACTION: Clerk**

The Chairman advised that information regarding determinations would be discussed under agenda item 18: Oral Update & Publications.

Minute 11: SACRE Draft Action Plan

The Chairman informed members that the proposal to invite neighbouring boroughs to attend SACRE meetings had not yet been explored, but would be considered for future meetings.

The Chairman noted that the revised SACRE Action Plan for 2018-19 would be discussed under agenda item 22: SACRE Draft Action Plan.

17 COMPLIANCE OF THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

No breaches of the GDPR were reported.

18 ORAL UPDATE & PUBLICATIONS

A.) SACRE ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman informed members that work was underway to produce the Bromley SACRE Annual Report 2017-18. The SACRE RE Advisor said that she intended to provide a draft version of the document to the SACRE meeting on 27th February 2019 for approval, following which the final document would be submitted to NASACRE and the Department for Education before the end of March 2019.

B.) 'RAMADAN 2019 – A SIMPLE GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS' – DR OMAR TAHA

The Chairman welcomed Dr Omar Taha, Al-Emaan Centre (Keston Mosque) to the meeting, and thanked him for producing the document 'Ramadan 2019 – A Simple Guide for Schools', and providing a copy to SACRE members.

Ramadan had taken place this year from 17th May to 15th June, resulting in an overlap with the traditional exam season. As Ramadan would continue to fall during the peak periods of exams and the summer months, it was believed that acknowledging pupils' needs could contribute to fostering good relations with, and promoting understanding between different groups. The guide

outlined considerations that schools may take with regards to the month of Ramadan, along with suggestions of what features may constitute best practice in schools. Dr Taha advised that the document was a revised version of the guide produced by the Lewisham Mosque and Lewisham SACRE, which had been tailored more to the Bromley borough and focused on educational elements and highlighted that the mosque offered visits and workshops.

The SACRE RE Advisor commented that the guide was very well-written, but considered that it could be set out slightly differently so that it could also be used as a learning resource. The SACRE RE Advisor felt that using the document as guidance and a resource for learning would expand its potential, and it could be linked to the Revised Bromley Agreed Syllabus. It was suggested that it could be beneficial to include some sample policies, to act as a template for schools. It was therefore suggested that all the information regarding Ramadan, beliefs and values be kept together, and a separate section added on what schools could do. It was agreed that the SACRE RE Advisor and Dr Taha would liaise to discuss the guide further.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor

A member noted that the guide stated that 'fasting is prescribed for all healthy males and females once they attain the age of puberty (this is relative based on the physiological and psychological make-up of each individual)', and enquired who decided the age of puberty. Dr Taha responded that it was generally the collective decision of the family, and there was not one definitive age.

C.) COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – 'RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS: THE WAY FORWARD'

The Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) had published its final report, 'Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward – A National Plan for RE', in September 2018. The CoRE National Plan was built around a National Entitlement, which set out what all pupils up to the end of Year 11, in all publicly funded schools, should be entitled to be taught. CoRE stated that the National Entitlement reflected a new and inclusive vision for the subject, which fully embraced the diversity and richness of religious and non-religious worldviews, and would ensure a strong academic basis for the subject in all schools. Their National Plan suggested a flexible approach in the translation of the National Entitlement into programmes of study in schools, ensuring that Headteachers were able to choose the approach that was most appropriate for their pupils.

A copy of the Executive Summary had been provided to members, along with a link to the full report. The Chairman noted that the report was very well written and presented, and advised that it was worth reading the document in its entirety.

The SACRE RE Advisor highlighted that one major change suggested by the report was to the subject title. It considered that the title 'Religious Education' was too acute and led to misconceptions. It suggested that the subject should be broader to include Humanism and other non-religious views and to create more discussions. Thus the title 'Religion and Worldviews' was suggested in the report. However, NASACRE were concerned that the proposed title was too broad and may dilute the study of religions. Another recommendation of the report was for the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education to be renamed the Local Advisory Network for Religion and Worldviews.

A member queried whether people would know the meaning of 'worldviews', and noted that even in the report it had to be explained. The Chairman responded that the term had been used for a long time in religious circles, but agreed that outside of these it may not be known. Another member echoed that 'worldviews' suggested a lack of religious belief, and felt this was a bit too broad and saw this as a dilution of Religious Education. The SACRE RE Advisor noted that the terminology used in the Bromley Revised Agreed Syllabus would need to be considered, as the report suggested that the Government and schools should change the subject name, but this was only a recommendation and may not actually happen.

The SACRE RE Advisor informed members that she had produced a summary of the final report, which she would provide to the clerk for circulation.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor / Clerk

A member stated that they felt this was the right thing to do, as the quality of the Religious Education delivered was patchy, and a national debate was needed. It was important that debates were happening at every level and creating a higher level of engagement regarding beliefs and values. It was about entitlement as so many children were not experiencing good quality Religious Education – it needed to be well resourced, and support provided for teachers to deliver it. Another member responded that it was important to encourage the debate, but as there were around 4,200 world religions it would be difficult to choose which ones to study. Having too many options suggested that pupils would not obtain enough understanding of each one. They were needed in addition to Religious Education, and not at the expense of it.

The Chairman said that the report was a helpful contribution to feed into the debate, but in reality it was highly unlikely that all the recommendations would be implemented at present. There was no appetite in Government to deal with this contentious issue, as they had lots of other pressing issues to deal with at present, but it was important that these concerns were highlighted.

D.) NASACRE RESPONSE TO THE CLARKE / WOODHEAD REPORT – 'A NEW SETTLEMENT REVISED'

NASACRE Patron, Charles Clarke and Professor Linda Woodhead had launched a revised version of their 2015 pamphlet 'A New Settlement', the

reworking of which had involved researching and ‘sounding out’ many of their original proposals. The 2015 booklet had proposed a new educational settlement to create a genuine understanding of modern religion and belief, and allow young people to explore their own and other peoples’ religious and non-religious beliefs and come to their own conclusions.

A member queried a statement on page 43 of the meeting agenda, which said that ‘the recommendations fall into three areas: 1. RE and Curriculum; 2. Collective Worship; 3. Faith Schools. The last of these, Faith Schools, is of no direct concern to NASACRE and SACREs’. The Chairman clarified that the report was referring to the fact that these schools had a specific intake, and it should have been made clearer that it was the recommendation that was of no concern, and not the schools themselves.

The Chairman highlighted that the report’s recommendation was to change the guidance to read, *‘All pupils in attendance at maintained schools and academies shall take part in a regular assembly or act of collective worship in keeping with the values and ethos of the school and reflecting the diversity and character of the school community’*. The original report had called for the abolishment of Collective Worship, but the revised report was reinstating it due to the consultation responses received. There was a legal requirement for something to take place, and reflecting the values of the school broadened the remit. The response of Paul Smalley, Chair of NASACRE, deemed this to be a sensible idea, and would mean that SACREs would no longer need to consider determinations, as no school would need to ask for it. A member responded that if there was not a political appetite to tackle the delivery of Religious Education, there would definitely not be the desire to tackle Collective Worship, and things were not going to change.

E.) GUIDANCE ON MANAGING THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Chairman reminded members that at the last meeting, it was requested that they be provided with further information regarding determinations and how they were exercised. Members were informed that the Local Authority would be purchasing a copy of ‘Guidance on Managing the Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education’, which had been produced by Gill Vaisey on behalf of WASACRE. It was noted that the SACRE had never received any determinations, but was obtaining a copy of this generic guidance so it was available if, or when, it was needed. It was noted that the CoRE report intended to broaden the subject, and had made several recommendations about the right to withdrawal. This may affect the workings of the right of withdrawal in the future.

A member stated that on joining the SACRE, representatives had a role of responsibility. Outside of school, pupils opinions of Religious Education were formed from the media which tended to have a bias point of view, and pupils needed to learn that this was portrayed wrongly. It was important to not lose focus on general beliefs and religions, and how pupils learn about them was

extremely important. Dr Taha echoed these feelings, and considered that there was no substitute for learning about a religion from a person of that belief, and it should be cultivated through community groups, school visits and feedback.

The SACRE RE Advisor advised members that in teaching, there were Attainment Targets (AT) – AT1, learning about religions and AT2, learning from religions. It was important for pupils to be religiously literate, and that AT1 and AT2 went side by side. AT1 would see pupils using the right terms and terminology and AT2 would then see pupils forming their own worldviews. It was noted that from her experience, if schools had an issue with someone being withdrawn from RE, it tended not to reach the SACRE. The school would speak to the parent, explaining AT1 and AT2, and as a result they tended not to proceed with the withdrawal. As a SACRE, she did not feel this was something to be overly concerned about.

'How relevant is Religious Education in the 21st century?' – Professor Cooling

The Chairman informed members that he had attended an event entitled 'How relevant is Religious Education in the 21st century?' on 10th October 2018. It had been a talk on 'the role of RE in our increasingly secularised culture' with speaker Professor Trevor Cooling, which had been facilitated by the Spinnaker Trust. It had been a very good event, which referred to the reports discussed earlier. The Chairman had been provided with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation delivered by Professor Cooling, which would be provided to the clerk for circulation to members. **ACTION: Chairman / Clerk**

Members enquired if the PowerPoint presentation could be circulated to schools. SACRE teacher representatives who had attended the event stressed that schools would not benefit from just viewing the slides, and suggested that Professor Cooling could be invited to deliver his presentation to RE subject leaders. The Chairman noted that Bromley schools had been invited to the event, some of whom had attended, but agreed that this was something that could be explored. **ACTION: Chairman**

'How should Religious Education respond to a changing religious landscape?'
– NatCen Social Research

The Chairman informed members that he would be attending a presentation entitled 'How should Religious Education respond to a changing religious landscape?', at NatCen, 6.00pm on 29th November 2018. A summary of the event would be provided to members at the next SACRE meeting. **ACTION: Chairman**

19 REVISED BROMLEY AGREED SYLLABUS

The Chairman reminded members that a revision of the current Bromley Agreed Syllabus was a legal requirement, and was in hand. The SACRE RE

Advisor said that in order for the Revised Syllabus to reflect the viewpoints of the SACRE and teachers, she was suggesting that a network be established to discuss the document. It was noted that the current syllabus offered lots of guidance, but teachers still needed to write their own schemes of work.

The SACRE RE Advisor said that in Hackney, teachers were provided with schemes of work, each with linked resources and lesson plans. This helped to support inter-borough competitions to take place. The SACRE RE Advisor proposed that this could be considered in Bromley. In addition, it was suggested that a sub group of the SACRE could be set up to contribute to the Revised Syllabus discussion.

A member said that her understanding of the current Agreed Syllabus was that the required element was just a small section of the document, and the bulk of it was not statutory guidance, it was 'stuff' to support the requirements. A teacher representative echoed that this was how the use of the document had been presented to teachers by the previous RE Advisor, with a suggested plan included which allowed for a good level of flexibility. The SACRE RE Advisor responded that this was not as clear as it could be, and problems would arise when a new RE leader took over and this information was lost. The Chairman noted that part of the issue had been the naivety of providing the Agreed Syllabus to schools on a CD-Rom, thinking that the different sections would be obvious, when in fact it was not clear and made it look like a huge document. A teacher representative advised that Church schools had moved away from lesson plans, which had improved the teaching of RE. Teachers were conducting more of their own research and developing a greater understanding of the subject, however it was noted that this was unlikely to be reflected across the borough as a whole.

A member considered that they thought it would be good to open discussions with teachers on what the purpose and character of RE might be, and noted that there would be a need to engage teachers and school leaders. There could then be a round table discussion with school representatives and SACRE members. The SACRE RE Advisor suggested that she could set up teacher networks with which the SACRE members could then link with at a later date.

The Chairman highlighted that the Revised Bromley Agreed Syllabus was a framework that would need to be approved by the Agreed Syllabus Council. Legally, this was a separate entity, but had previously involved all SACRE members who formed the Agreed Syllabus Council for final sign-off of the document. When it came to voting, the result had to be unanimous and not a majority. Each Committee group had one vote, which also needed to have all members in agreement. Going forward, it would need to be considered if the whole SACRE would become the Agreed Syllabus Council, or if it would be done on a smaller scale, with just one representative from each Committee group. Following a discussion, it was agreed that a separate meeting would be set up for those SACRE members who wished to be involved in the deliberations regarding the Revised Bromley Agreed Syllabus.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor

20 SCHOOL VISITS & SCHOOL LINKS

The SACRE RE Advisor informed members that she had been considering ways to build relationships with the schools, other than through school visits. The SACRE RE Advisor planned to initiate conversations with the school RE co-ordinators by setting up meetings, ideas for which included network meetings, teacher training and syllabus feedback. These would be established before being linked with the SACRE, and could mean that school visits were no longer needed, or could be in addition, as the information they were seeking to obtain would be provided by the teachers at the meetings.

The SACRE RE Advisor said that all schools would be invited to attend the networks and would give those that were struggling, but may not necessarily admit it, a chance to meet other teachers and share ideas. A member noted that historically, it had always been hard work to get teachers together. The SACRE RE Advisor responded that she planned to start with the primary sector first, as there were a larger number of schools and tended to be easier to engage with. As a starting point, she planned to telephone the schools individually to request the contact details for their RE Co-ordinators.

A teacher representative noted that this had been attempted before by a previous RE Advisor, and little feedback had been received. It was felt that there needed to be a hook to get teachers involved. The SACRE RE Advisor responded that an Inter Faith borough wide competition would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 23: Any Other Business, which she believed could act as an incentive for teachers to get involved. Another teacher representative considered that the SACRE RE Advisor would need to 'win over' the Headteachers, and suggested that a slot at the Headteacher Forum would be a good place to start, allowing the information to be filtered through.

The Chairman advised that the invitation to attend the network sessions should be addressed to those staff that delivered RE, and not just the RE Co-ordinators, as in a number of schools this tended to be the Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA). A teacher representative agreed that this was common practice as it was a standalone subject. Dr Taha suggested that an evening training session could be delivered, particularly for those HLTAs that did not feel fully confident in delivering RE, with representatives from different communities and religions attending to teach them.

The Chairman stressed that the opportunity for SACRE members to accept invitations to visit schools should not be lost, and noted that James Dixon Primary School delivered an RE Day each term which they were keen for SACRE members to experience.

21 COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The Chairman informed members that a PDF version of the document 'Reflective Pools – Refreshing Collective Worship in Bromley Schools' had been produced, and it was also available on Fronter.

The LBB Head of School Standards advised members that Fronter was an electronic portal that had been purchased by the borough many years ago, and was now felt to be a very 'clunky' system, which did not feel like a website. The LBB Head of School Standards would be attending meetings in the coming week regarding Fronter, as it was not being used to its full potential. Currently, only Headteachers and SENCOs had logins, so work was being undertaken to obtain generic school logins for access to the SACRE and School Standards areas. It was planned for the improved system to be up and running by January 2019, and an update would be provided to the next SACRE meeting. Members requested that a generic login for SACRE members also be explored. **ACTION: LBB Head of School Standards**

22 SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN

The Chairman advised members that they had not been provided with a copy of the SACRE Draft Action Plan as the SACRE RE Advisor had not yet been able to have an input into it. It was agreed that the SACRE RE Advisor would add actions from the meeting to the document, and an updated Action Plan for 2018-19 would be provided to the clerk for circulation to members.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor / Clerk

23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Islamic Competition

The Chairman informed SACRE members that the Prize Giving evening, facilitated by Mr Mahmood at Darul Uloom, would not take place this year due to no schools having contributed to the Islamic Competition.

The Chairman noted that at previous SACRE meetings, he had expressed the view that it would be good to organise something similar on a broader scale, either specifically for each faith or a wider religious competition to develop more depth of understanding.

Inter Faith Week – 11th-18th November 2018

The Chairman advised SACRE members that Inter Faith Week would take place during 11th-18th November 2018. Inter Faith Week took place every year, and although it was felt to be too late to organise events for this year, the Chairman suggested that the 3 Faiths Forum could host an open forum. It was considered that this could be relatively easy to set up, with schools submitting questions to representatives of the faith communities and taking part in a three-way panel discussion.

The SACRE RE Advisor informed members of a calendar competition which she ran in Hackney to raise awareness of the SACRE. A theme was provided to teachers for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and their pupils then produced

artwork linked to this theme. The winning artwork was then selected to feature in the calendar, which listed all the important dates in religious and worldview calendars. Copies of the calendars were printed and provided to all Headteachers and RE Co-ordinators. The SACRE RE Advisor said she felt that this was something that could be launched at the teacher network. These networks could, in future, also include a theme being discussed, and SACRE members invited to attend to talk about their religion, or share an artefact. The Chairman noted that the Islamic Competition was not a SACRE event, as it was developed by Darul Uloom to ensure that students had a good understanding of the meaning of Islam. Members stressed that it was important that part of this theme be retained.

A member stated that he was concerned that there may be initiative overload, requiring teachers to do too much, and questioned how they would resource a competition and continue with their workload in addition to it. The SACRE RE Advisor said that at the network meeting, she would discuss with the teachers their capacity to deliver these additional competitions. Members noted that commitment from the schools to be involved would be needed, especially if a budget was allocated, to ensure it was not wasted. The SACRE RE Advisor responded that for the calendar competition, only thirteen drawings were needed. The template and links were already established, and there would be no expenditure until the number of pictures was confirmed. Teacher representatives said that as the competition was new, not all schools were likely to 'come on board' in the first year, but there were two teacher representatives in attendance who would be involved, which meant only a few more schools would be needed to make the competition viable.

24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.00pm, Wednesday 27th February 2019

The Meeting ended at 8.05 pm

Chairman