

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 5.30 pm on 3 March 2021

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, David Jefferys, Kate Lymer,
Keith Onslow and Chris Pierce
Mrs Denise Angell, Reverend Rachel Archer,
Ms Hannah Arnold, Mr Daniel Coleman, Mrs Donna Gold,
Mr Lee Kings, Mr Arvinder Nandra, Ms Stella Odusola,
Dr Omar Taha, Ms Jan Thompson and
Mr Christopher Town

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 Adviser

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Robert Evans.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16 COMPLIANCE OF THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

No breaches of the GDPR were reported.

17 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

B) MATTERS ARISING

Minute 7: Bromley Agreed Syllabus

The Chairman advised that the support materials for the Syllabus, being produced by the SACRE RE Adviser, were “a work in progress”. Members were shown how the SACRE section of the Bromley Education Matters website could be accessed. The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that the ‘Curriculum Map’ had been uploaded to the website and that she was working with teachers during the network meetings to devise contents for each unit and look at how it could be delivered. The Curriculum Map took into consideration Ofsted’s expectation of the progression of a pupils’ key knowledge – this key knowledge had been identified for each unit and would be built upon as pupils moved through the school. Each unit had an enquiry question, based on the model within the Syllabus which included key beliefs and values; key philosophical thinking; and practices in the lives of believers and non-believers. This gave pupils the opportunity to reflect, consider these big questions and look at responses from different faiths and world views, in order to establish their own response. Three units had been created per year which allowed teachers the flexibility to choose how they delivered them. The units each consisted of eight to ten lessons which could be added to, and each unit plan had resources to accompany or explain how the suggested activities could be delivered to get the key knowledge across to pupils.

In response to a question, the SACRE RE Adviser said that the units of work did not result in an exam or test, however an element of work she would be undertaking with the teachers was looking at how they could assess pupils’ work and progress against the ‘Skills Spectrum’ of the Syllabus. At the network meeting in the summer term they would be discussing how to use pupils’ work to consider the skills demonstrated, which would allow teachers to report on pupil progress.

Minute 8: SACRE Action Plan (including relationships with schools)

The Chairman noted that the strategy for collating RE resources for pupils would be discussed in further detail later in the meeting (Minute 19 – REal Resources).

Minute 11: SACRE Self-evaluation

The Chairman noted that Members’ responses to the SACRE Self-evaluation had been collated by the SACRE RE Adviser and would be discussed in further detail later in the meeting (Minute 21 – SACRE Self-evaluation).

18 REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

No determinations had been received.

19 'REAL' RESOURCES

Report CSD21035

The Bromley SACRE Adviser was seeking to support the creation and development of a wide range of electronic resources that could support the

delivery of the new Agreed Syllabus. These resources would be made available to schools via the SACRE section of the Bromley Education Matter website.

The SACRE RE Adviser reminded Members that the idea to create videos demonstrating personal faith to share with schools had been discussed at the last meeting, and thanked those that had already sent in video clips. It was noted that the creation of videos was not just limited to the faith representatives on the SACRE and any Member wishing to do so could submit a clip.

There were four key questions to be addressed which related to the Curriculum Map:

- "What do I believe about how the world began?" (Year 1);
- "What buildings/places are important to me/do I use for worship, and how do the features or items here show what I believe [about God] and value as important?" (Year 3 and 5);
- "What do I wear that shows my beliefs/values?" (Year 2); and
- "What do I believe happens when we die?" (Year 5).

A SACRE Member enquired if there was the potential for others to contribute to the videos. It was suggested that the Bromley Three Faiths Group could collaborate on a video, if it would be considered helpful, to show an aspect of community cohesion. The SACRE RE Adviser agreed and said that she would like to expand on this idea even further by setting up and recording a debate between representative from a number of different faiths. Depending on the question, this would help to demonstrate to pupils both the similarity and vast differences of the response received from members of different faiths. Following a brief discussion, SACRE Members agreed that this sounded like a good way forward, however, it was highlighted that there was a need to ensure that all those being interviewed were provided with the questions in advance to allow responses to be prepared.

In response to a question, the SACRE RE Adviser said that clips had been received covering responses to the four questions. "What do I believe about how the world began?" had been covered from the aspects of Judaism and Christianity, and a clip covering "What do I wear that shows my beliefs/values?" and "What do I believe happens when we die?" had been received from Islamic faith representatives. The Chairman had also agreed to film a tour of his church and the Islamic faith representative would be filming a tour of a mosque. The Jewish faith representative had spoken with members of her reformed synagogue and would be looking to put together responses to some of the other questions and a tour. It was highlighted that the more responses received for each question the better, as it would allow pupils to discuss and compare.

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that she had also approached friends with regards to creating video clips, and noted that a school had contacted her to advise that parents had prepared a video of worship in the Hindu home, which was an idea that she would share and discuss in further

detail with teachers at the network meetings. A Member highlighted that if those creating the videos included their own children, if there was the capacity to do so, it would be beneficial as children often liked to listen to other children talking.

A Member suggested that Richard Martin, who had written a number of books on inter-faith relations, could be approached to see if he would like to provide an overview. The Chairman agreed that this was something that could be pursued. **ACTION: Chairman**

Another Member suggested that SACRE Councillor representatives could consider providing a clip focussing on religion and how it was dealt with in public life, including explaining why the SACRE was in existence and the impetus behind it.

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that a meeting would take place over the next couple of weeks to discuss how the videos could be uploaded and shared. The Chairman advised that this may be via a secured private page on Youtube, which would safeguard against any of the materials being misused.

20 INTER-FAITH COMPETITION

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that the schools' calendar competition had been launched – primary and secondary schools had been notified and details were listed on the Bromley Education Matters website. Despite only being launched the previous week, three schools had already submitted competition entries and lots more were hoped for.

Teachers had been provided with a document, produced by the SACRE RE Adviser, giving clear details about the competition theme and how ideas could be generated with pupils. Entries were to be scanned in high definition and submitted via email.

21 SACRE SELF-EVALUATION

Report CSD21034

At the autumn meeting of the SACRE, Members were asked to communicate in their representative groups to look at the following sections of the SACRE Reporting and Evaluating Toolkit:

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 Chairman thanked Members for sending their thoughts to the SACRE RE Adviser, and a summary was provided. The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that all of the responses received had been incorporated into the document and colour coded in ‘developing’, ‘established’ and ‘advanced’ criteria. Overall, most areas were light and dark green as they were considered to be ‘established’ or ‘advanced’.

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that she had been particularly pleased with the responses relating to the locally Agreed Syllabus, which had recently been launched and had received extremely positive feedback. In future years, further work would be undertaken with teachers to monitor its use and implementation, although they were already aware of around 25 schools using the Syllabus.

With regards to Section 4 – ‘Management of SACRE and partnership with LA and other key stakeholders’, the SACRE RE Adviser noted that her personal reflection was that the Bromley SACRE was extremely well supported and encouraged by the Local Authority.

The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that Section 5 – ‘Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community’ was the only section that had areas considered to be ‘developing’. However, it was highlighted that the self-evaluation related to the previous academic year and some of the recommendations listed were already being worked towards. The ‘REal Resources’ would be useful for helping to build on the SACRE’s knowledge and understanding of world faiths and world views, and the idea discussed earlier in the meeting of an inter-faith interview would also support community cohesion. The SACRE RE Adviser considered that Section 1 – ‘Standards and quality of provision of RE’ was always hard to evaluate as it was dependent on schools engaging with the Local Authority and SACRE RE Adviser. The school network meetings were now attended by between 20-30 primary schools and 7-8 secondary schools. This highlighted that they were now engaging with a larger number of schools in the Borough. The Head of School Standards informed Members that the feedback received from teachers attending the network meetings had been phenomenal.

A SACRE teacher representative highlighted that there were two areas within Section 2 – ‘Effectiveness of the Locally Agreed Syllabus’ which should be rated as ‘established’ rather than ‘advanced’ for the 2019-2020 academic year. With regards to 2c – ‘How well does SACRE promote the Agreed Syllabus and provide training to prepare teachers to use it effectively?’, it was considered that during this period the numbers of teachers attending the meeting had been inconsistent, and had only become more consistent in the current academic year. This was echoed by another teacher representative,

who felt that 2c could only be rated as 'advanced' for the current academic year as there was evidence of regular attendance to support it. Question 2d – 'To what extent is membership of the Agreed Syllabus Conference able to fulfil its purpose?' was also considered to be 'established' as during the previous academic year there had often only been a couple of teacher representatives in attendance at meetings. The SACRE RE Adviser suggested that a recommendation should be included in the self-evaluation to increase the number of teacher representatives across all phases to ensure attendance was consistent.

Following a brief discussion, SACRE Members agreed that 2c and 2d in the self-evaluation should be amended and rated as 'established'. These changes would be incorporated and the self-evaluation would be added to the finalised SACRE Annual Report.

In response to a question, the Chairman said that he was not aware of any advice or guidance being produced for schools regarding acts of remembrance or worship for those who had lost their lives during the pandemic, but agreed to check this in further detail with NASACRE.

ACTION: Chairman

It was noted that a day of national remembrance and reflection was proposed for 23rd March 2021, which was the first anniversary of the first period of lockdown. The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that a common issue in schools was the difference between assemblies and Collective Worship. The 'Reflective Pools' resource was available to schools on the Bromley Education Matters website and was something that she would like to work on in the future. With regards to any sort of commemorations for those that had passed during the pandemic there was a need to be aware of the distinctions between worship and commemoration.

22 DRAFT BROMLEY SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

SACRE Members were provided with a copy of the draft Bromley SACRE Annual Report 2019-2020.

The SACRE RE Advisor noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic there had not been any GCSE data and therefore the draft Annual Report included information from the previous academic year.

A Member noted that on page 5 of the Annual Report there was a reference to the 'GCSE Short Course in Religious Studies' and asked for further information relating to it. A SACRE teacher representative advised that in the Short Course less content was taught over the normal period of time (usually two or three years). The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that not as many schools now undertook the Short Course following changes to the core studies of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), in which it was no longer included.

The Chairman noted that the amendments to the SACRE self-evaluation discussed earlier in the meeting would be incorporated, and following a brief discussion, Members agreed that they were happy to approve the SACRE Annual Report 2019-2020. The SACRE RE Adviser would provide the clerk with the finalised version to be submitted to NASACRE, Department for Education and published on the Council's website.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor / Clerk

RESOLVED that, subject to the agreed amendments to the SACRE self-evaluation being made, the SACRE Annual Report 2019-2020 be approved.

23 SACRE ACTION PLAN (INCLUDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS)

Members had been provided with a copy of the SACRE Action Plan covering September 2020 to September 2021 which had been produced by the SACRE RE Adviser.

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that as the second network meetings for both primary and secondary school teachers had taken place these actions could now also be marked in green as 'complete', as could the inter-faith calendar competition which had now been launched.

A Member said that he would like to see a return to the organisation of SACRE Member visits to schools so they could see how RE was being taught. The SACRE RE Adviser said that there had been a discussion regarding the Local Authority consolidating visits when she had first joined the SACRE, however all visits would have been paused due to the pandemic. A teacher representative noted that there was likely to be a delay before schools could allow visitors – however visits were considered a very good idea and would help “put RE on the map” and provide support for RE leaders in schools. The SACRE RE Adviser suggested that consideration could also be given to holding future SACRE meetings at local schools. This would provide an opportunity for schools to showcase the work being undertaken and allow SACRE Members to see pupils work first-hand.

The Chairman advised SACRE Members that due to the pandemic the planned live launch of the Agreed Syllabus had been unable to take place, which they had intended would include input from students, and it was hoped that something similar could be held at some point in the future.

24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Membership

The Chairman informed SACRE Members that Mrs Edlene Whitman, Free Church representative, had resigned from the SACRE as she was planning to

move away from the area in the near future, and he was actively trying to seek a replacement representative. It was noted that the SACRE RE Adviser was also looking to identify representatives of Buddhist and Orthodox Jewish faiths.

SACRE Members were reminded that last year, a discussion had taken place regarding whether they wished to have a Humanist representative sit on the Committee. An email had recently been received from Humanists UK assuming automatic inclusion on the SACRE and advising that a representative had been identified. The Chairman informed SACRE Members that a response had been sent advising that this proposal would be brought back to the Committee to gather their views, and asked if they felt a Humanist representative was required and if they should be appointed to Bromley SACRE.

A teacher representative said that from a curriculum perspective having Humanist representation on the SACRE would be valuable. The curriculum focussed on 'Religions and World Views', and Humanism was now incorporated within the new Agreed Syllabus. A Member noted that he was not against the appointment of a Humanist representative but highlighted the 'Religious Education' element in the name of the SACRE. It was queried if Humanism was considered to be a religion as this could cause some confusion. The SACRE RE Adviser responded that when the Agreed Syllabus had been revised the wording had been amended to 'Religions and World Views', an element of which was recognising that there were lots of people that did not have a religious view, or believe in a particular religion. It was noted that more information would be available following the 2021 Census, but based on the 2011 Census they were aware that there was a demographic of those that did not believe in religion and therefore they did not want RE to exclude those pupils. The Agreed Syllabus had been carefully worded to incorporate non-religious viewpoints, of which Humanist was just one example. The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that she was aware that it was not considered to be a religion by some SACREs, who therefore had Humanist representatives sitting within the membership group of the Local Authority.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that it would be a good idea to take guidance from what other SACREs had done in terms of appointing a Humanist representative, as although they did not have a faith or religion, Humanism was itself a widespread belief system. A Member agreed and noted that NASACRE should also be contacted to see if any further correspondence relating to this had been issued.

A teacher representative informed Members that Humanism was about celebrating the uniqueness of humanity, and all its diversity, and celebrating life in all its richness in the here and now. The SACRE RE Adviser noted that this was a helpful distinction as when looking at responses to the ultimate questions Humanism had a particular belief system and would not be the only Atheist response, therefore consideration could possibly be given to the requirement of an Atheist representative.

The Chairman agreed that this was complex and noted the point previously made regarding Members being unsure how a Humanist / Atheist view would be embraced within a committee for Religious Education. However, with the curriculum expanded to 'Religions and World Views' there could now be a case for a representative. The Chairman said that he felt further consultation was needed – a response could be sent to Humanists UK advising that their proposal would be seriously considered, however, they were not currently in a position to confirm if the SACRE would appoint a Humanist representative.

In response to a question from a Member, a secondary teacher representative confirmed that Humanism had been taught within the GCSE Syllabus over the last few years. A primary teacher representative said that this element of the Syllabus gave a child information to shape their own identity from both a religious and non-religious perspective. The Syllabus was designed to teach a child that there was diversity within all religions – they were given the knowledge and the ability to think about how this applied to them, which allowed them to shape their own faiths and beliefs.

In response to a question from a SACRE Member, the SACRE RE Adviser said that within Collective Worship there needed to be awe and wonder and reference to a 'supreme being'. Some Humanists may interpret that as humanity itself and therefore would not necessarily be opposed to Collective Worship. The input of ideas and contributions may be slightly lent towards that element, however, it was emphasised that this would be dependent on the individual. The Local Authority had a responsibility to appoint suitable representatives – there would be a caveat that anyone appointed to the SACRE would work within the agreed objectives of the Local Authority, and that they would have a mindset based on community cohesion. The Chairman advised SACRE Members that the last Humanist representative to sit on the SACRE had previously been a Councillor representative and had always personally chosen to abstain from taking part in any discussions relating to worship.

The Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education suggested that in addition to contacting NASACRE, questions could be put to Humanists UK asking how they recommended that any representatives dealt with the scenarios posed, such as discussions around Collective Worship. The SACRE RE Adviser noted that they could also be approached to provide information relating to representation on other SACREs. The Chairman agreed and highlighted that the SACRE needed to gather as much information as possible before making a decision. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that the Chairman would draft a letter of response to Humanists UK to that effect. **ACTION: Chairman**

Hinduism Report

The SACRE RE Adviser informed Members that in January 2021 the results of a national survey of Hindu parents had been released by Insight UK. The main concern of the findings was that 81% of the parents surveyed had stated

that they were unhappy with the teaching of Hinduism in schools – particularly the knowledge of teachers and the content of the curriculum. The SACRE RE Adviser emphasised that they had worked hard to ensure that the locally Agreed Syllabus and curriculum did not present a negative picture of Hinduism. The Hinduism section of the Syllabus focussed on the beliefs around creation and not to harm any living thing. It was hoped that some responses from the Hindu faith could be incorporated in the 'REal Resources', and it would be key to have active participation on the SACRE from Hindu faith representatives, and have more than one representative if required.

A Member said he considered that members of any faith were their own best advocates to promote their religion, and they may need to address how they felt the teaching in schools could be improved. Whilst being sensitive towards this feedback, it was possible that if parents of other religions were surveyed similar results may be returned.

NASACRE AGM and Conference

The Chairman advised SACRE Members that the NASACRE AGM and Conference would be taking place virtually on the 24th May 2021, and he would provide an update at the July meeting of the SACRE.

25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.00pm, Wednesday 7th July 2021
6.00pm, Wednesday 1st December 2021
6.00pm, Wednesday 23rd February 2022

The Meeting ended at 6.56 pm

Chairman