

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 28 February 2024

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Jonathan Andrews,
Dr Sunil Gupta FRCP FRCPath, David Jefferys,
Chris Price and Rebecca Wiffen
Denise Angell, Hannah Arnold, Caroline Ringham,
Lee Kings, Christopher Town, Katie Burtonshaw,
Patricia Colling, Iqbal Klimo and Arvinder Nandra

Also Present:

Councillor Graeme Casey (*via conference call*)
Julia Andrew, LBB Head of School Standards
Stacey Burman, SACRE RE Adviser
Sara Groenli, LBB Head of Educational Effectiveness
Alex Hamill (*via conference call*)
Katie Turner (*via conference call*)

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robert Evans, Deborah Corcoran and Omar Taha.

Caroline Ringham gave prior notification that she would need to leave the meeting at 7.00pm.

Apologies were also received from Jared Nehra, LBB Director of Education.

The Chairman welcomed Sara Groenli, LBB Head of Educational Effectiveness to the meeting.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29 COMPLIANCE OF THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

No breaches of the GDPR were reported.

30 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1ST NOVEMBER 2023

With regards to item 15, it was requested that the beginning of the second paragraph be amended to read:

'Councillor Dr Sunil Gupta said that he ran a Yoga school in the Borough'.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment noted above, the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

B) MATTERS ARISING

In relation to Minute 19: 'Local and National Updates', the SACRE RE Adviser encouraged SACRE Members to register/enrol on the RE Hubs website. The importance of schools being able to make contact with local representatives of different religions and worldviews was emphasised.

With regards to Minute 23: 'SACRE Annual Report', Councillor Jefferys advised that the SACRE Annual Report had been presented to the meeting of Full Council on 11th December 2023. The document had been well received, and thanks were extended for the work undertaken.

The Chairman noted that updates in relation to any matters still outstanding would be provided during the meeting.

31 REVIEW DETERMINATIONS

No determinations had been received.

32 RE LEARNING IN THE BOROUGH

The SACRE RE Adviser informed SACRE Members that a session for Bromley secondary schools had been delivered that morning, which focussed on how teachers could help their pupils navigate a dialogue regarding the situation in the Middle East. Nine teachers, from five different schools, had attended – resources and activities had been shared, and were positively received. All attendees had been very engaged, and a further session had been requested.

A Teacher Representative advised that two Early Career Teachers (ECT) from her school attended the session, and had commented that they had found the information relating to managing difficult/controversial conversations particularly beneficial.

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that a Bromley primary RE session had also been held that afternoon. In addition to selecting the winning entries for the inter faith calendar competition, they had discussed what was considered to

be 'good RE' and what was expected in lessons. They had also shared ideas to develop the 'thinking time' for pupils.

A Teacher Representative that attended the primary RE session said she had shared some examples of work from her school. They used floor books which pupils were allowed to look at during the day and add to them. The group had discussed how pupils' individual books could also be used – such as using blank pages for 'thinking space' to note things down that they wanted to explore further. Another Teacher Representative said they were also focussing on preparing primary pupils for transition to secondary school. The SACRE RE Adviser said the group had discussed the importance of questions and the emphasis on responses, rather than answers, and the importance of listening to the responses of others.

The SACRE RE Adviser informed SACRE Members that approximately 25 schools in the borough were in regular contact and the work undertaken in relation to the syllabus, networks and resources was having a positive impact.

33 LOCAL AND NATIONAL UPDATES

The Chairman informed SACRE Members that the government had announced it would not be renewing its funding to the national Inter Faith Network (IFN) – without this funding the IFN could not continue to function, and would be closing down. It was highlighted that the effectiveness of local networks was now even more important.

The SACRE RE Adviser said that the IFN network in Bromley had an overlap with the membership of the SACRE, and she had previously suggested bringing the two together. One idea discussed had been the development of the 'REal Resources' – these were being used in schools, had been well received, and would continue to be developed. At the last meeting, the possibility of holding an inter faith workshop had been discussed – for example faith representatives could be asked to talk about a concept from the primary RE curriculum, and materials from this could then be developed into resources for schools. In order to progress this further, the SACRE Adviser said she would be applying for Westhill Funding. The deadline for submitting the bid was the 31st March 2024 – if successful, a working group would be established, and any SACRE Members interested in helping to develop the inter faith workshop could participate.

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that, in May 2021, Ofsted published a series of subject reports, and the report on RE had been discussed in depth – a follow up report was due to be published by December 2023, however this had been delayed. An extract from the Ofsted Annual Report regarding the general national picture of RE had been provided in the agenda pack. Ofsted appeared to have been generally disappointed with the RE delivered and the lack of quality – this was not the case in Bromley. The SACRE RE Adviser reassured SACRE Members that the Locally Agreed Syllabus contrasted greatly to some of the negative statements in the report.

The SACRE RE Adviser highlighted that she had added some questions underneath the extract which schools could contemplate. A Member considered that these questions were very thought provoking.

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that the NASACRE Conference and AGM would be taking place on 20th May 2024 – the Ofsted Annual Report may be discussed at the event and, if so, further feedback could be provided at the next SACRE meeting.

A SACRE Member highlighted that the Church of England schools in the borough had their own network of primary schools which received training, including that provided by the Diocese. The SACRE RE Adviser said she would like to contact the Advisers at the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education regarding the potential to link the Church of England network sessions with those that she delivered for the Local Authority. It was considered that community schools could benefit from their collective worship resources/guidance, and vice versa as the REal resources covered a range of other religions and worldviews. It was agreed that a meeting would be arranged between the SACRE RE Adviser and a representative of the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education.

ACTION: SACRE RE Adviser / Lee Kings

The SACRE RE Adviser said the school Governor survey, which would be discussed under the next item, had been useful in helping to identify schools following a different RE syllabus. These schools could now be contacted, and provided an opportunity to open up conversations about the syllabus and good RE in general.

A Member said that he agreed with the proposals suggested – there was a good tradition in the borough of “doing things the Bromley way” and this seemed a good way of driving things forward. The Chairman encouraged SACRE Members to respond to any requests received from the SACRE RE Adviser.

34 RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP SUPPORT

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that the results of the school Governor survey had been included in the agenda pack. Key highlights included: 34 completed surveys had been received; most schools did not have a named Governor for RE, but some would now consider doing so; and most Governors said they wanted to continue to be informed or receive training about RE.

In relation to question 8, the SACRE RE Adviser noted that all school websites should state which RE curriculum was taught, and it was also suggested that the subject lead be listed. The SACRE RE Adviser proposed that a further exercise be undertaken to look at the Bromley school websites to see what information was available, and asked if SACRE Members could assist. It was noted that a Google Form had already been devised to capture this information. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that SACRE

Members would be provided with a list of Bromley school websites for them to review. **ACTION: SACRE RE Adviser / Clerk / SACRE Members**

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that the Bromley RE Agreed Syllabus document was available on the Bromley Education Matters website. It was suggested that, in future, videos/pictures of pupils' work could also be uploaded alongside this to celebrate the good work being done in schools and promote the Bromley Agreed Syllabus. A Member noted that this linked with question 5 of the Governor survey where 18 schools had claimed to be following the Bromley Agreed Syllabus, however it had been established that five of these schools were not actually doing so. The SACRE RE Adviser informed SACRE Members that academies were legally obliged to follow a locally agreed syllabus unless their funding agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) stated otherwise. With regards to Church of England schools, in February 2019 a statement was released outlining the directive that they should follow their locally agreed syllabus in the first instance, with other Diocesan curriculum and syllabus materials being provided, such as London Diocesan Board for Schools syllabus, which could be adopted if it was felt this was not of a sufficient standard. With regards to question 9, a number of Governors had said they did not know if there were RE displays in their school – the SACRE RE Adviser said she had asked about displays in schools as this was something they could ask questions about during their next visit.

The SACRE RE Advisor highlighted that a significant number of Governors said they wanted to receive training in relation to RE – it was suggested that consideration may need to be given to holding a session on RE for Governors/non teachers. This could potentially be combined with a SACRE event, providing sessions/workshops demonstrating 'good RE'. The Chairman agreed that this was a good idea, and noted that he had previously provided input for Governor training. Following the most recent session he had been contacted by Governors who had highlighted that they did not know what questions to ask, and it may be helpful to provide them with some guidance. The LBB Head of School Standards advised that the Local Authority held Governor Forums and Governor Briefings, and suggested that training could be provided at a future session. In response to a question, the LBB Head of School Standards confirmed that these sessions received lots of engagement from academies.

In response to a question from a Member, who suggested holding a wider community event to showcase religions and worldviews, the SACRE RE Adviser said that the school Special Objects Project had culminated in a school community event, attended by parents and faith leaders. In response to questions from another SACRE Member, the SACRE RE Adviser highlighted the need to engage more with Headteachers. It was known that schools struggled with curriculum time and the subjects that were moderated would be prioritised. It was considered that a Headteacher survey may need to be undertaken in the future.

The LBB Head of Educational Effectiveness said that there may be an opportunity to link with school leaders via other networks. There was a mental health forum, which was very well attended, and thought could be given to including an RE item on a future agenda. Consideration could also be given to providing some form of training at the Governor Forum held in the summer term. The SACRE RE Adviser noted that, if they were successful in their bid for Westhill Funding, thought could be given to developing inter faith workshops for various audiences.

A Member highlighted that very few people knew about the good work being undertaken by the SACRE – it was suggested that an article could be included in the Local Authority's magazine. Following a discussion, it was agreed that the SACRE RE Adviser would record a video, which included input from SACRE Members, providing an introduction to the SACRE – it was noted that this could also be used by Councillors during their group meetings.

ACTION: SACRE RE Adviser

The Chairman requested that a meeting be arranged between himself, the LBB Head of Educational Effectiveness, LBB Head of School Standards and SACRE RE Adviser to discuss taking forward the proposals suggested.

ACTION: Clerk

35 INTERFAITH DIALOGUE RESOURCES

The SACRE RE Adviser informed SACRE Members that the school Special Objects Project, in which several Bromley schools took part, had received extremely positive feedback and featured as the Research of the Month by the Culham St Gabriel's Trust in January 2024:

<https://www.reonline.org.uk/research/research-of-the-month/the-faith-belief-forum-special-objects-project/>. The SACRE RE Adviser noted that they had also been approached to speak about the project at two national conferences.

The SACRE RE Adviser informed SACRE Members that, as already mentioned in the meeting, the winners of the inter faith calendar competition had been selected earlier that day. It was noted that the winning submissions were received from a range of schools and year groups, and captured different religions and worldviews. The SACRE RE Adviser noted that a list of dates for religious and non-religious events and festivals would be drafted and sent to faith representatives to be double-checked before the calendar was finalised. It was requested that Members' responses be received by a certain date, otherwise comments and amendments may not be able to be included.

ACTION: SACRE RE Adviser / SACRE faith representatives

36 SACRE ACTION PLAN (INCLUDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS)

The SACRE RE Adviser had provided Members with an updated SACRE Action Plan for the period September 2023-September 2024. The SACRE RE

Adviser highlighted that the actions were coloured coded and those marked in green were complete.

The SACRE RE Adviser noted that following the proposals made during the meeting the action plan would be updated to include the review of the school websites, production of a video regarding the role of SACRE, and the proposed inter faith workshop event.

37 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

38 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.00pm, Wednesday 3rd July 2024
6.00pm, Wednesday 4th December 2024
6.00pm, Wednesday 26th February 2025

The Meeting ended at 7.45 pm

Chairman

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