

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Minutes of the Lewisham SACRE meeting

which was open to the press and public and was held on
Thursday 23 February 2023

On Zoom

These minutes were approved by the SACRE/ ASC on: 9 May 2023

GROUP	REPRESENTING	NAME	PRESENT
A	Baha'i	Afonso Veiga	y
A	Buddhism	David Hutchens	y
A	Free Church (Assemblies of God) Chair	Pastor Nick Hughes	y
A	Free Church (Baptist)	Vacant	
A	Free Churches (URC)	Vacant	
A	Hinduism	Mukunthan Sathasiva Sharma	Ap
A	Hinduism	Vallipuram Bala	y
A	Humanism	Jennifer Sutherland	y
A	Humanism	John Turner	y
A	Independent Evangelical	vacant	
A	Islam	Ms Aisha Lodhi	
A	Islam	Imam Ashraf	Ap
A	Islam	Imam Sabir	y
A	Judaism	Gerald Rose	y
A	Judaism	Joan Goldberg	y
A	Pentecostal Layo's Substitute	Cheryl Abbam	y
A	Pentecostal	Layo Segun	y
A	Pentecostal Substitute	Br Ogbu Olu	
A	Roman Catholic	Rt. Rev. Monsignor Nicholas Rotherham	y
A	Sikhism	Vacant	
B	CofE Diocesan Board (Deputy Chair)	Shaun Burns	Ap
B	The Church of England Primary teacher	Karen Hansen	y
B	The Church of England Minister	Paul Wynter	
B	The Church of England Secondary teacher	Samantha Alder	Ap
B	The Church of England Governor	Vacant	
C	Academy/Free School	Vacant	
C	Lewisham Headteachers & Deputies	Vacant	
C	NAS/UWT	Korkor Burnett	y
C	NAS/UWT	Mandy Keeble	
C	NEU	Kim Griffiths	y

C	NEU (Chair ASC)	Kim Knappett	y
C	NEU	Vacant	
D	LA members	Cllr Jacq Paschoud	y
D	LA members	Cllr Liz Johnston-Franklin	y
D	LA members	Cllr Aliya Sheikh	
D	School Governors (Primary)	Caroline O Kalu	y
D	School Governors (Secondary)	Vacant	
D	Director of Education	Angela Scattergood	y
D	Substitute for Angela Scattergood	Ruth Griffith	
D	Substitute for Angela Scattergood	Sandra Roberts	
OTHER			
	Rastafarian (co-optee)	Vacant	
	Primary teacher	Judith Nweze	
	Young Mayor Team	Katy Brown	y
	Young Mayor Team	Nicholas Gunner	y
	RE School Improvement Officer	Denise Chaplin	y
	SACRE Clerk	Stephen Sealy	y
	Visitors/members of the public	Anne Andrews	y
	Visitors/members of the public	Elizabeth Maxted	Ap
	Visitors/members of the public	Mona Jones	Y
	Visitors/members of the public	Simon Cardy	Y
	Visitors/members of the public	Daniel Mayer	
	Visitors/members of the public	Sher?	

The meeting began shortly after 6.30pm

1 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

1A WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. He advised that, given the number of items on the agenda, some items may need to be carried forward to the next meeting.

All attendees introduced themselves.

1B APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

These are indicated in the register above.

1C CONFIRMATION OF ORDER OF ITEMS FOR THE MEETING

The order of items as circulated was agreed by all.

2 Minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held in November 2022 on Zoom

Subject to a spelling correction, these were agreed as an accurate record of the November meeting.

3 Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

3A MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Denise advised that this remains a work in progress. The Church of England vacancies remain although Samantha is hoped to attend the next meeting after maternity leave absence. Progress is also ongoing to fill the NEU vacancy and that vacated by Nigel Desborough, while some others are proving more challenging.

3B WEBTRAWL COMMUNICATIONS WITH SCHOOLS – SANDRA

Denise reported that she had discussed this with Sandra.

Angela added that School Improvement Partners and Headteachers had been informed of this project and were welcoming of it subject to it being a supported process. They agreed that Denise would share her findings with Sandra who would then share these with the School Improvement Partners.

She suggested that it would be helpful to provide a half-a-page length report on the common themes for inclusion in the bulletin.

Denise suggested two such themes were schools using an out-of-date syllabus and no mention on the websites of parental right to withdraw pupils from RE and collective worship.

Cllr Paschoud advised that the upcoming year's SACRE dates be submitted for inclusion on the council calendar as this was currently being set. This would also serve to elevate the committee's status.

With reference to item 3A of the previous meeting, Gerald advised that school visits to the synagogue were currently not taking place. He was prepared to continue visiting schools with Jewish artefacts but had been advised that this would no longer be under the auspices/patronage of the synagogue or covered by its liability insurance. After a review of synagogue visits and the insurance implications that they present, and in view of schools' failure to make donations despite indicating that they would, the synagogue had decided to charge schools £75 per visit.

A second concern for him visiting schools was that Lewisham schools no longer allowed external hard drives to be connected to their computers. Emailing presentations isn't straightforward although he has bought a laptop which appears to have resolved the issue.

Kim K advised that most schools would have appropriate public liability insurance but advised that Gerald discuss this with the executive committee separately.

A further concern is that Lewisham schools have informed Gerald that they do not use the DBS updating service which Gerald subscribes to. Angela to take this back to the LA.

3C HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS 2023 – GERALD AND JOAN

(This point was dealt with at the end of the meeting)

Gerald reported that the organiser of the event was new. There had been no workshops in schools this year and plans to host a survivor through the HMD Education Trust were not realised.

The event took place on the Sunday nearest 29 January, but as neither the theatre nor the Rivoli were available, the chairman offered the use of the smaller, synagogue hall for the event.

The Mayor delivered the opening address and a further address was delivered from the Board of Deputies. There was a contribution from a local Imam, a reading by children, and a 10-minute presentation by Steven Lock whose mother, not Jewish herself but with a Jewish bloodline on her father's side, had been rescued by the Kindertransport. There was also a reading from the Young Mayor of Lewisham, and the singing of the beginning of Psalm 133 in Hebrew by a church choir. This was followed by words by Rabbi Weisz, whose wife's grandparents were in Auschwitz. Candles were lit.

Gerald added a document to the chat promoting free resources.

3D WEBSITE ISSUES

Denise informed that the SACRE was unable to invite teachers to events unless this was administrated through Services 4 Schools. However, the functionality to do this hadn't been enabled yet. Denise committed to investigate this further.

4 SACRE Annual report 2022

Denise reported that SACRE's Annual Report was written in the new DfE-approved NASACRE template. Each SACRE's report will feed into a national summary report, with headlines shared at the NASACRE Annual General Meeting later in the year.

She led members briefly through the annual report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Denise requested that members respond to her by 24 February 2023 with any changes to the report appendix attendance data.

She reported that she would forward the report onto Dinah Griffiths' cousin who had been her end-of-life carer.

Denise advised that the tabled report only refers to national data; Sandra had attempted to obtain local data for the SACRE but had not been able to achieve this.

She relayed a concern expressed by the RE Council and others that subject specialists are being reduced and she suggested that the committee revisit its documentation on collective worship, not having revised this in a few years.

Kim K reported that an Inter Faith meeting had been organised for next month at the mosque to look at faith groups' response to policing in the borough. She expected that there would also be a Peace walk later in the year.

A proposal to accept the report, subject to any minor changes to the attendance data, was proposed and seconded by committee members.

Kim K motioned an expression of gratitude to Denise for writing the report and to Nick for his contribution.

Cllr Liz Franklin-Johnson commended the writing of the introduction which she considered very moving and an apt description of the borough. She commented that this was a positive complement to the data within the report, adding that the commentary on the Education White Paper was fantastic.

The Chair endorsed the commendation by the Councillor, commenting that it showed the borough in a favourable light.

5 LA information – Sandra Roberts

5A EXAMS IN LEWISHAM 2022 and 5B CENSUS DATA ON FAITHS AND BELIEFS

Angela committed to forward the census data to the committee.

However, the notable changes over 1% from previous census data were:

- A. An increase from 27% to 28% of those of no religion, although this question was voluntary.
- B. A decrease in those identifying as Christian from 52% to 43%.
- C. A 1% increase in those identifying as Muslim.

9% had declined to answer about their religion in the previous census, reduced to 7.5% this time around.

Angela committed to send the validated exam data to Denise.

Angela was unable to present any RE / RS data for Lewisham schools but summarised that, for the primary phase, Lewisham was in line with the national position in reading, writing and maths. There were also good secondary results with, for the first time, positive progress data.

There was also impressive data for disadvantaged children at GCSE in attainment and progress.

5B CENSUS DATA ON FAITHS AND BELIEFS

6 Ramadan Advice for schools 2023 (and LIC Advice)

Denise advised that two advice documents – from the Islamic Centre and SACRE, respectively – were on the agenda for agreement in the meeting to be circulated to schools.

She summarised the document.

Cllr Paschoud advised that the dates in the document are incorrect and should refer to the period from 22/23 March to 21 April.

Karen suggested that, on the front cover ‘meeting the needs of Muslim pupils’ should be followed by ‘and staff’.

This was agreed by all.

Gerald suggested that rough start and end times of the fast may be a useful inclusion. Kim K suggested that a link to the Mosque's online information would be a better suggestion.

Korkor suggested that 'Muslim community' replace 'Muslim pupils and staff' on the front cover.

Cllr Pashoud noted that its reference to puberty-age pupils meant that children who are now reaching puberty at primary school age would be doing the full fast, which wouldn't have been the case in the past. This would mean a greater responsibility for staff in primary settings.

There was an expectation that the majority of Muslim pupils in secondary schools would have the full fast.

7 Communication with SACREs on Collective Worship – a Lewisham Humanist perspective – John and Jennifer

Denise reported that, following the circulation of an email to all SACREs in the country from a West Sussex Humanist member on the issue of collective worship, she had asked John and Jennifer (who had discussed this with Humanist UK) to offer a Lewisham perspective.

John summarised that the said email had been sent at the end of January but didn't represent an official Humanist position.

The email stated that collective worship in the UK was in contravention of ECHR regulations.

John advised that the email was sensationalist and contained inaccuracies, of which Humanist UK were aware.

Jennifer advised that the accepted Humanist position was that they would like to see the nature of school assemblies changed to become as inclusive as possible. She felt that the Lewisham guidance appropriately captured the nuances and inclusivity of collective worship. (She added a link to the Humanist UK webpage in the Zoom chat.)

Denise commented that collective worship differed from corporate worship, and offered an opportunity for all children to use space and silence to reflect.

SACRE's guidance had last been reviewed in 2017; Denise proposed that this be reviewed in the next meeting, to ensure it was up to date.
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Anne, a colleague of Denise's from the NASACRE Exec, commented that the Church of England, often held up often as a bastion of collectivity had aspirations for its collective worship to be invitational, inspirational and inclusive, during which everyone is able to feel present and engaged. She likened it to a warm fire which one could gather round as close or far as they're comfortable with.

As such she felt that the dichotomy regarding collective worship was false.

Karen expressed her agreement with Anne, commenting that in her school and others in the Southwark Diocese all pupils have an opportunity to reflect and none are coerced to pray.

Denise commented that some people across the country would feel more embattled than others. She expressed that, despite some SACREs feeling the need to act outside of the law, there was no need for them to do so.

Kim expressed the view that collective worship in her school was inclusive and significantly more than had previously been the case.

The Chair thanked John for his clarity which, alongside Anne's comments, he commended, remarking how useful this forum was for this type of informed communication.

John suggested that there may need to be further intelligence gathering, commenting on the difficulties of a single inclusive assembly and suggesting that one solution to this was the option of an alternative assembly.

Denise suggested that INSET training be provided on this subject.

Caroline expressed the view that the committee should support collective worship as this was ultimately about promoting caring.

Cllr Sheikh added that this offered the opportunity of developing tolerance for others.

8 Culham St Gabriels' survey of parents' views on RE

The Chair requesting that members read the feedback with a view to this agenda point being carried forward for discussion in the next meeting.

9 NASACRE AGM – expressions of interest in attending

Denise reported that, with the exclusion of herself, two members could attend this prepaid-for event, which would be held in person at Fishmongers Hall in London on Monday 22 May. She advised that workshops would be online, as they were for the previous AGM.

She requested that members communicate their expressions of interest to her by the next meeting.

10 Information Exchange and AOB

Denise reported that she had responded to a recent FOI request on LAs working with their SACREs. Analysis of the responses will be shared in due course.

11 Date of next meeting: May 9 via Zoom

The Chair thanked all for attending and Denise asked for volunteers to host the summer meeting in person.

8.10pm the meeting finished.